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THE

INDIAN QUEEN.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

AUTHOR OF "AHMO'S PLOT," "THE INDIAN PRINCESS," ETC.

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THE INDIAN QUEEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE STROKE FOR A THRONE.

AN Indian council-fire was lighted on the banks of Seneca lake; the flames streamed up cold and white in the radiance of the setting sun, and the heavy clouds of smoke, tinged like rainbows by its beams, rolled away over the forest and floated in transparent mist over the Iroquois village built on a picturesque curve of the shore. The glory of midsummer lighted up the woods and lay warm and bright on the beautiful lake. It was the season when all that was poetical and picturesque in savage life wore its richest charms—when those rude natives forgot all the hardships of the cold, stern winter, and yielded themselves to the indolent enjoyment of the long, sunny days.

A great stillness lay over the Seneca village; the people had come out of their wigwams and were gathered as near the council-fire as they dared approach, their picturesque dresses lighting up the background until they looked like a flock of strange tropical birds hovering around the flames which they dared not approach. About the council-fire were grouped the leading chiefs of the Six Nations' tribes, who, for several weeks past, had been participants in the unusual feasting and merriment which had made the old forest joyous.

It was a band of noble, stately-looking men, sitting in a circle in the red firelight, grave and dignified as Roman Senators gathered in their forum, listening calmly to the various speeches, weighing carefully each word and bringing all the vivid power of acute minds to bear upon the matters in question.

In their midst stood a woman in the fairest bloom of youth, with her crimson robes falling so royally about her, and her every gesture so full of intellect and refinement that any stranger unacquainted with her history and her designs, might have almost believed with the poor savages, that she was a direct

messenger from heaven to work their good. This was Mahaska, the white queen, or Mahaska the Avenger, as she loved to call herself. She was Katharine, daughter of Frontenac, the French Governor-General of Canada, by an Indian woman who was daughter of the Seneca chief Nemono. When, in accordance with the will of their dying prophet, they brought the half-white girl Mahaska to be their principal ruler, most of the chiefs among the nations were so deeply impressed by the last revelations of their beloved prophet that they accepted her presence and the state which she took upon herself with the blind fidelity of humbler members of the several tribes; but there were a few who, either from personal ambition or the contempt for women which made a part of their savage education, opposed her will in every way that they dared, and were trying their utmost to raise up a party which would enable them to counteract her rapidly-increasing influence. Mahaska, perfectly acquainted with their plans, and confident of her power to thwart them, only waited for the best moment to crush their schemes forever by some daring act or some craftily-woven plot, whichever should best suit her purposes and be likely to produce the greatest effect on the tribe.

Mahaska's present ambition was a desire to wage war against the Delawares—a powerful tribe residing south of the Iroquois territory—who had been known to speak slightly of her claims. This she deemed a favorable opportunity to prove her warlike powers to the Indians, and stronger still was her desire to avenge the slightest affront offered her by that powerful tribe and to crush any daring spirit among her own people that had the audacity to dispute her power.

As the council-fire flamed up and the chiefs grew more and more attentive, she spoke in her bold, imaginative way, carrying the hearts of the people along with her by her resistless eloquence, and noting the effect she produced by the occasional murmurs which broke from the multitude stationed in the background, in spite of the utter silence and decorum it was their habit to preserve on such solemn occasions.

She ended her thrilling appeal and turned toward the chiefs, folding her statuesque arms over her bosom and with the flame-tinted light quivering like a glory around her.

"Mahaska has spoken," she said; "let the chiefs weigh well her words."

"Mahaska's voice is like the wind sent by the Great Spirit," returned the oldest chief in the assembly; "it goes straight to the hearts of her brethren."

"Mahaska speaks only as the Great Spirit commands her," she said, "from the wisdom of the visions which he sends to her in the night time."

The little knot of chiefs who were opposed to her whispered ominously among themselves—the woman's quick eye noticed this.

"Do the braves meet at the council-fire to hold secret consultations?" she demanded, turning toward the old chief Upepah.

"They meet to speak their thoughts and wishes," he answered; "why is Mahaska troubled?"

She pointed toward the little group and said in a low, silky tone, which, after the savages learned to know her better, they knew covered the fiercest and bitterest anger:

"Because, the Fox whispers among his friends and sneers at Mahaska's words."

The chiefs turned toward the little party with frowning brows, and murmurs of disapprobation broke from the people in the background, over whom Mahaska's influence already was almost boundless.

The braves with whom the Fox had been whispering dropped slowly from his side, not daring to support his cause however strongly their wishes might go with his. He was a middle-aged man, with a peculiar depth of firmness and sullen obstinacy in his face. Though he looked slightly discomposed by this unexpected address, he bore the dissatisfied glances with cold dignity.

"Mahaska came among her people because the Great Spirit sent her, and because the Senecas asked her to come," continued the woman. "It is not well that, in the very outset of her work among you, designing chiefs should whisper among you like bad spirits to counteract her great purposes."

A murmur went up from the crowd in echo to her words:

"It is not well, it is not well!"

"Mahaska has obeyed her people's wishes; she has chosen

a husband from among their chiefs; if the Iroquois will listen to her she will lead them on to new glory."

"They listen and cherish her words," returned Upepah, the old chief. "Mahaska has seen them rejoice over her coming—she knows that the hearts of our braves and our young maidens have been gladdened by her presence; let her have faith in her people. She is a great chief."

She turned slowly toward him and lifted her face full upon him and smiled with a power of fascination which lighted up her features into wonderful beauty.

"It has been the dream of Mahaska's life to be with her people," she answered; "every wish in her heart has turned toward them as a young bird pines for its nest in the green leaves."

"They have watched for her coming," he said; "the young maidens and children have been taught to speak her name with reverence; they will come like children to hear the wisdom which she has learned among the whites."

"Let the chiefs listen too," she exclaimed, with the arrogance natural to her; "Mahaska has visions such as never were unfolded to their greatest prophets; she will teach them arts which will make them able to combat the cruel whites who are seeking to tread out the red-man's footsteps from the broad lands their fathers owned."

"The Iroquois have not had babes and cowards for their chiefs," said the Fox, unable to keep silent, however unfit the moment to dispute her wishes, or however dangerous to himself might be the result of bringing the angry feelings between them to an issue before the council.

Mahaska scanned his lofty figure from head to foot; the smile did not leave her features, but it looked on the hardness of her face like sunlight playing over ice, and the light in her eyes deepened and grew vicious like those of a serpent just ready to spring.

"The chief is not content with the woman chief his people have chosen," she said, in her lowest, softest tone.

"Mahaska mistakes," he answered; "the Fox welcomed her willingly as his brothers, but he never heard that she was to sit at the council-fire and be treated as a chief."

"When Mahaska is not a chief she leaves the tribe forever," she replied calmly.

"Mahaska is married; why does not Gi-en-gwa-tah her husband speak for her?"

The young chief to whom he alluded rose on the instant and answered with stately pride:

"Gi-en-gwa-tah is chief of the Senecas, but he can not know the visions which Mahaska sees; the Great Spirit converses with her as he did with our prophet, but her husband is like his brethren, only a warrior; he can not understand words from the Great Spirit."

Mahaska gave him an approving glance and moved nearer the council-fire.

"Let the Fox speak," she said; "what are his thoughts?"

Thus unexpectedly confronted by the woman armed with the double spell of her gorgeous beauty and the spiritual influence which she had over the minds of a superstitious people, the chief was at loss to reply. For a few seconds he sat silent while Mahaska watched him with a look of grave expectation.

"Why is the Fox silent?" she cried.

"He is not a woman that his words should fall easily and are lost, like the rain," he answered.

"No!" she exclaimed, "he is silent because he is true to his name—because he is crafty and wants to work underground; he wishes to carry on his plans in the dark and uproot the love of the people for Mahaska, but when he looks in her face he has no courage to speak."

"Is the chief a child that he should fear to look a woman in the face?" the chief returned, contemptuously.

A deadly sweetness deepened the smile that still played over Mahaska's lips. She evinced no other sign of the fierce passion which raged in her soul and which made her determine that the struggle between them should not be prolonged until the weight of his influence and years should be able to tell against her claims. The strife between them should end then and there—either disgrace or death should be his portion; she would risk all her power in one daring act.

As yet, though her influence was great, she could not count fully upon the savages. A few years later and the slavish submission to which she had reduced them was so entire that if she ever looked back upon that scene she smiled with

contempt at the hesitation and caution which she had been constrained to use. Her passion and desire for revenge now overswept all bounds, making her alike insensible to the future, personal safety, every thing that stood between her and the gratification of her unwomanly hate.

The words of the Fox were received with new signs of disapproval by the people; the elder chiefs looked puzzled and surprised; those who had promised to support him kept aloof; but all these things only excited the obstinacy of the Indian—he would not yield then. Gi-en-gwa-tah, Mahaska's newly-made husband, had started forward at those contemptuous words, but a glance from his wife restrained him and he fell back among the leading chiefs, panting with rage.

Mahaska drew her figure to its full height. She pointed her finger at the Fox with a look of withering scorn, and her voice rung out over the crowd clear and distinct as the tones of a trumpet:

“The chiefs hear!” she exclaimed; “the people hear; will they be silent? Years ago the Senecas were warned by their prophet that the granddaughter of the great Nemono would one day come among them; he bade them listen and obey her implicitly, and promised that she would make them the greatest tribe among all the Six Nations. Mahaska came—she had been reared by the Great Spirit for that purpose—even in her childhood she had visions such as never came to the wisest of your old men; she obeyed the voice of the prophet—she came among her people to lead them on to power and glory.”

Subdued acclamations went up, but she checked the sound by a gesture.

“Upon the very entrance to her career she is checked by this crafty Fox; he seeks to undermine her power; the Great Spirit has warned Mahaska how he plots against her, but she does not fear his snares. Mahaska must be respected and obeyed; her power is that of a prophet and a chief; she is led by the voice of the Manitou and she can never err. She will not argue with this base dog; she will not stand at the council-fire where he is permitted to stand; she will reveal no wishes of the Great Spirit—hold no communion with her people, until they promise to heed her will in all things.”

Even the presence of the chiefs could not restrain the cry of dismay which went up from the tribe at her words. The Fox heard the ominous sound and knew that his scheme of resistance had failed—the wily woman had forced on the struggle before he was prepared, and was crushing him under the suddenness of the blow; but to yield was not in his nature.

“The Fox was a great brave,” he said, “before Mahaska’s feet had learned to walk alone; her voice is only the voice of a woman; she has still many things to learn.”

There was a murmur from the crowd growing more and more excited; reverence to the girl had been taught them as a part of their religion, and they clung to the faith with all the blindness and intensity of their untutored natures.

Again Mahaska’s voice rung out with something so ominous and deep in its tone that even the obstinate savage quailed:

“Be silent while Mineto speaks through my voice,” she cried. Even her enemy started back and gazed on her with bated breath. “Mahaska came here at the request of her people,” she said, in that deep, persuasive voice that rolled like rich music through the throng. “She has been sent by the Great Spirit to give counsel to her people, to teach them new power and glory. Had she found already disobedience and insult? She will go away—will return to her white brethren. Let a boat be made ready—she will leave her people. Mineto commands it. When a chief of the tribes disputes her power she will not stay.”

There was a universal exclamation of terror at her words, and they crowded about her as if to prevent the fulfillment of her threat.

“The maiden speaks with too much fire,” still persisted the Fox; “her words leap out like a mountain torrent; those who rule should talk slowly and weigh well their words.”

At that instant a black cloud swept up the horizon and hovered directly over their heads; Mahaska was not slow to notice and to work upon their superstitious fears by pointing it out as an omen.

“Behold!” she exclaimed, pointing on high. “The Great Spirit sends a sign; he is angry with his people! Is this the welcome they give his messenger? Let them beware! Famine and pestilence shall weaken their strength; the white

men shall take them as slaves; the glory of the Six Nations shall go out forever."

They fairly trembled at her words, delivered with all the fire of an inspired prophetess. Angry murmurs rose around the chief who had incurred her anger; but with true savage obstinacy he would not yield.

"The Senecas have been a nation of warriors since the Great Spirit sent the red-men upon the earth," said he; "it is not at the voice of a maiden that he will weaken their braves and destroy their women."

The half-breed's fury was now aroused to its deadliest heat.

"Either the lying-tongued warrior is given up to my vengeance," she cried, "or I quit the tribe forever! Do not think to detain me—the Great Spirit would send down a chariot of fire from yonder cloud and bear me from your sight, did I not execute my wishes."

"Let Mahaska decide!" exclaimed numberless voices; but the chiefs about the council-fire were silent, scarcely knowing how to act in this strange turn of affairs.

"Mahaska will not wait," she cried, in a strong voice; "the chiefs hear the voice of the people; let them give up the lying dog or Mahaska leaves them forever. Behold the black cloud—how it spreads and deepens—coming nearer and nearer to snatch Mahaska from her tribe. So Mineto speaks; his voice breaks from the cloud."

A low roll of thunder preceded her words by a single moment.

"No, no!" shouted the crowd. "Mahaska shall not go—give up the Fox to her—give him up! give him up!"

The doomed man sat motionless in his place; not a muscle quivered; not a line in his face betrayed the terrible suspense which he endured.

"Will the chiefs speak?" cried Mahaska; "are they dumb—do they dare to hesitate?"

She flung up both arms toward the black cloud and muttered words in a language unknown to them. The heavy cloud settled lower and lower as if approaching slowly at some mandate of her own. A quiver of flame ran through it, and the thunder that had but muttered before boomed out fearfully. Chiefs and people were alike terrified at the idea

of her being suddenly snatched from among them by supernatural means, and they cried out like the voice of one man:

"Let Mahaska's will be obeyed. She is our prophet and Gi-en-gwa-tah is our chief."

Rendered desperate by his situation, the doomed savage exclaimed:

"The Senecas are dogs to be led by a woman. The Delawares were right—they are dogs and cowards."

A sudden rush was made toward the spot where he stood, but the woman sprung between the savages and her victim.

"Back!" she shouted. "Who dares to come between Mahaska and her prey!"

Her hair had broken loose from its coronet of feathers and streamed heavily over her shoulders; her rich dress flashed out in the firelight as the dusk increased; her face was like that of some beautiful fiend.

Before any one could move again she snatched a tomahawk from the belt of the nearest chief and flung it with unerring aim. A low, dull, horrible *swash* followed. The Indian gave one terrible cry—a fierce leap into the air, and fell dead upon the ashes of the council-fire.

"Mahaska has obeyed the great Mineto!" she exclaimed; "so perish all her enemies."

She saw the savages standing stupefied, and pointed again to the cloud, which began to drift slowly away, sending back fiery threads of lightning.

"Behold!" she cried. "The cloud-chariot is floating off—Mahaska will stay with her people, but they must obey her, worship her, for she and Mineto are one!"

She rushed toward the prostrate body—tore off the eagle plume that decorated his head, fastened it in her hair, still crying wildly:

"Mahaska is sister to the Great Spirit; who dares doubt her now? She has killed a warrior and wears his plume. Mineto made her a prophet. She has made herself a chief."

The warriors gathered in a circle around the council-fire. Mahaska stood in the center with one foot on the breast of her prostrate foe.

"Speak!" she said; "is Mahaska your prophet and your chief?"

"Mahaska is our prophet and our white queen. Gi-en-gwa-tah is her husband and our chief," was the steadfast reply.

For one moment Mahaska's face was as the thunder-cloud, but with acute foresight she saw that her power had been tasked to the utmost. The tribe was not prepared to acknowledge her as the supreme head of its warriors, and she was not yet strong enough to brave the band of chiefs that surrounded her.

Her face cleared. She looked down at the body of her foe and spurned it with her foot. With a fierce gesture she wrenched away the tomahawk which the dead chief still clutched in his hand, wielding it aloft.

"Mahaska has won her right to be called a chief," she cried out, with fierce pride. "Do her people doubt now?"

Again that great shout went up:

"Our queen, our queen! We accept the gift of the Great Spirit. Mahaska shall be our queen forever!"

She stepped proudly into the center of the ring, her hand still grasping the tomahawk.

"Chiefs," she cried, "behold Mahaska is now indeed a queen. The lightning crowns her. The great Mineto shouted from the sky when she clove that traitor's skull."

They crowded about her with subdued acclamations and lowly reverence; and there she stood in the fading glories of the sunset, with that cruel smile upon her lips, that deadly light in her eyes, to receive the homage of her people; yet her bosom heaved in its rage, that they had insisted on sharing her sovereignty with Gi-en-gwa-tah. She was queen, but he was chief and her husband.

CHAPTER II.

THE TIGRESS DALLYING WITH HER PREY.

WHILE the savage enthusiasm of the gathered people was at its hight, Mahaska did not forget to urge anew the wish for a chieftainship, which the dead Fox had opposed. Her set purpose was in no manner changed by the evident decision of the chiefs to consider her their prophet and queen—not their chiefest chief. They said, “Gi-en-gwa-tah is our chief, as he is your husband;” thus implying that she was not supreme. A great throb of pain, the pang of a thwarted ambition, shot through her bosom. Had she, the daughter of the noble Frontenac, deserted her father’s halls of splendor—had she cast her civilization away and wedded, at the command of her Indian half-countrymen, a savage chief—all to be denied the prize for which she had aimed? No! the fierce heart of the woman cried; she would be chief not alone of the Senecas, but chief of her husband—chief of the Six Nations; she would be supreme, or be powerless altogether. She glanced toward Gi-en-gwa-tah, her eyes fairly blazing with indignation. A sense of intense dislike of him surged through her breast.

His brow was overcast with thought; there was a heavy pain in the stern, dark eyes. Love for his beautiful wife had become so strong in his savage nature, that it was absolute idolatry; but, with all his bravery, his heart was gentle and tender almost as a woman’s. It had sent a terrible shock through his whole being when he saw Mahaska, with her own hand, deal that death-blow to his enemy. Not that he loved her less; his savage teachings made him admire her daring; but the pain was at his heart, notwithstanding, and he shuddered when he saw the blood-stain on that slender white hand.

The young chief felt no jealousy of his wife for the supremacy she had gained over the people. He believed, firmly as the others, in her supernatural powers; but the sneers of the murdered man had touched him to the quick—he burned for

some opportunity to prove to his people that he did not bury his manhood in the reflected glory of a woman, however much he might bow before her claims as a prophetess and the descendant of their great medicine men, by whom she had been bequeathed to the tribe.

Whatever the feelings might be which actuated him, Mahaska could not afford then to allow any cloud to come between them—hereafter it would matter little; her eagle gaze was looking forward to a future of undivided sway, to which the present was but a stepping-stone.

She motioned the chiefs to approach her, saying:

"The council-fire has been kindled in vain—the braves have forgotten."

"Mahaska is wrong," returned Upepah; "the chiefs never forget; let them hear the queen speak."

"The Delawares are our neighbors, but Shewashiet, a chief of their tribe, has said that the Senecas are cowards, because they have chosen a woman for their great medicine prophet. You have just proclaimed Gi-en-gwa-tah your first chief. Let him take a band of warriors and bring Mahaska her traducer's scalp. It shall be a proof that he is worthy to share her rule over a great tribe."

A shout of exultation went up from the body of youthful warriors, checked at once by a sign from the old chief. They looked at her with new pride and wonder. To their savage natures, the bloodthirsty spirit she evinced had nothing revolting in it; they only worshiped her the more for her ferocious decision.

Gi-en-gwa-tah placed himself by her side, uttering a shrill battle-shout. Again there was a consultation about the council-fire, then Upepah said:

"The queen has spoken well. In three days the braves will set out upon the war-path. Our young chief shall earn another plume."

He turned toward the young men and delivered an address full of fire and passion, calculated to inflame still more their desires and ambition. Then the chiefs rose—the council was broken up.

Mahaska made a proud obeisance of farewell, and passed out of the throng, casting a meaning glance at Gi-en-gwa-tah,

who was conversing with Upepah, which he understood as a sign that she desired to speak with him.

The whole band of young warriors filed into procession and followed at a little distance in her footsteps, till she reached her lodge. She turned at the entrance, bowed a last farewell, and disappeared, retiring to her own inner room.

Mahaska now sat down upon a pile of furs, and gave herself up to hard, cruel thought. The straight, black brows contracted, the great eye gleamed out balefully beneath, and her whole face so changed and darkened under her wicked reflections that it looked years older.

The first obstacle in her path had been swept aside—her first foe had fallen a victim to her vengeance; the gratification of her own evil passions had only strengthened her power.

There was no regret in that cruel heart, even in the solitude of her lodge. Though her half-savage nature had been refined by education, and softened by the best blood of France, every instinct of her soul became barbarous under the reign of her vaunting ambition, and of her desire to avenge supposed wrongs. It seemed as if the white blood in her veins had turned drop by drop to hate. So hideous a transformation it was hard to conceive, but history writes that it was so, and her extraordinary career has left behind records enough to prove her to have been more savage, more treacherous, more relentless, than the untutored barbarian would have been. Katharine Frontenac, when she threw aside her civilized life, became Mahaska, the Avenger. The avenger of what? She forced herself to say that her father, Count Frontenac, had neglected her mother, Chileli, whom he had chosen as his lawful wife, but whom he had killed by neglect. As Katharine Frontenac, she had dared to love, with a fierce, wild love, a French cavalier, but he had spurned her, and had wedded another—her rival sister, a child of Frontenac's second wife, the beautiful Countess Adèle. It was this rejection, which had decided her to cast away all the ties of civilization, to become a tigress in the wilderness—this rejection which had turned all the sweet springs of her spontaneous, exuberant nature into waters not of bitterness alone, but of qualities repulsive enough to slake the thirst of ghouls.

After a time she heard Gi-en-gwa-tah's step in the outer room; at the sound, her hand instinctively clenched the handle of her tomahawk, in unison with the deadly thought in her mind. The loathing which she first had felt when forced to wed the noble savage, grew every day more deep. She inwardly shrunk from the earnest devotion which beamed in his eyes—from the anxious love with which he watched her every glance; but now that he stood in her path, she began to scorn and to hate him.

For the present it must be endured with that patience and craft which were the inheritance of her Indian blood; but woe to the hapless man when the hour came that should enable her to carry out the schemes which had been in her mind even on the very day when he led her to his lodge.

He swept aside the furs which hung before the entrance to Mahaska's lodge, and entered the apartment; she sat there so peaceful and calm in her splendid beauty, that it hardly seemed possible she could have been the author of the bloody deed which had filled every heart in the tribe with consternation, scarcely an hour before. Perhaps some such thought was in the Indian's mind as he stood looking down upon her.

The first sound of her voice was low and sweet as that of some woodland bird hushing her young:

"Gi-en-gwa-tah has left the chiefs' company for that of Mahaska," she said. "Mahaska thanks him for it."

"Mahaska's wishes are always pleasant to Gi-en-gwa-tah," he answered; "she signed him to follow as she left the council-fire."

The woman motioned him to her side with a smile of winning sweetness. For the present she must essay all her arts of fascination to retain him her slave; the day was not far off when she would boldly declare her will, and crush him in her path if he disputed it. But that time had not yet come, and now she was anxious to remove from his mind the impression left there by her cruel murder.

"Have they taken away that dog of a chief?" she asked, as he seated himself at her side.

"The squaws of burthen have carried him into the woods," he answered, gravely; "there is no burial for a brave dishonored and disgraced."

The woman laid her hand softly on his arm :

"Gi-en-gwa-tah's brow is dark; there is a shadow on his heart because Mahaska his queen revenged herself on her enemy. She was warned by the prophet that this man's death was necessary; he was dangerous to Mahaska; he would have disputed her power, and led his people into great troubles. Mahaska does not love to shed blood, but she must obey her visions; she was warned to do this."

She spoke in a tone which greatly impressed the brave; he had the most implicit faith in her supernatural communications.

"Mahaska has done well," he answered; "she is a chief now—she might tread the war-path with the noblest of the tribe."

"But, Mahaska does not wish Gi-en-gwa-tah to think her cruel," she said; "she is a woman to him—she loves the chief."

His dusky face glowed under her words, spoken in that thrilling, impassioned tone. She watched him narrowly. To her crafty nature there was a bitter pleasure in this loathsome deceit; the more fondly he loved her, the sterner the retribution she should be able in the future to bring upon him for having been the man whom fate had assigned as her husband.

"The Fox hated Gi-en-gwa-tah," she went on; "he was plotting against him; can not Gi-en-gwa-tah think why? *He* wanted to be the husband of the queen—he would have used all his arts to put the young chief away, that he might aspire to his place."

A fierce light shot into Gi-en-gwa-tah's eye; she had touched the right chord; he forgot every thing, except that the murdered man would have conspired against his happiness with her.

"The dog is dead," he hissed; "let him lie unburied; his carcass shall become food for the crows. Mahaska has done well; her visions never speak falsely."

She smiled in his face, with the fascination which, in her past life, had thrilled many a noble white heart.

"Henceforth, even the memory of the Fox shall not desecrate Mahaska's lodge," she said; "his spirit is with the dark shadows that can never enter the happy hunting-grounds."

She changed the subject, and began speaking of the expedition which was to take place.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah will lead the young braves," she said; "Upepah has promised Mahaska. While he follows the war-path, and brings back her enemy's scalp, Mahaska will work for him at the council; her chief shall be the greatest of the Six Nations."

He listened eagerly to the visions of future greatness which she called up.

"Mahaska is happy," he exclaimed, suddenly, giving utterance to some train of thought which had been called up by her words.

"Happy?" she repeated. "Why does Gi-en-gwa-tah ask idle questions?"

"It was no question," he replied; "Gi-en-gwa-tah sees that she is content. Once he feared that the dark forest might look dreary to her. Mahaska, in the Governor's palace, has been reared gently; he feared that she might regret all that she left behind in the white settlements."

Mahaska's brow darkened when her life among the whites was spoken of. She had left nothing there but a dead youth, crushed under terrible hate and thwarted dreams. The dreams were buried deep in the past; the hatred she brought in her heart to the forest, to be nursed and strengthened until she should be able to make the loathed race feel its most deadly sting.

"Mahaska is among her people," she said, proudly; "she has obeyed the will of the Manitou, and dwells among them as their queen. What should she regret?"

But his words recalled the one era in her life when tender emotions had for a time softened her heart. She looked at the Indian; she remembered the noble pale-face whom she had given a love intense with the passion and fire of her Indian nature; she remembered how she had been scorned and set aside for another: the hatred she had vowed against the man who had preferred another to her, was reflected toward the savage who had come between her and the lonely state which she had struggled to maintain, but which she had to forego in order to gain ascendancy over the tribes. It was difficult for her to feign longer; she was young still, and her

self-control could sometimes be shaken. At such times it was necessary to be alone, that no human being might suspect the tempest which stirred her whole nature to revolt.

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah return to the chiefs," she said; "Mahaska hears the voices of her spirits; they have promised to come to her to-night."

The Indian rose at once, with a sudden awe settling over the gravity of his countenance; he glanced furtively about, as if almost expecting to see some trace of the supernatural beings of whom she spoke.

"In the morning Mahaska will tell her dreams to the chief," she said; "many things have been whispered faintly to her which will now be said clearly. Gi-en-gwa-tah will follow their warning?"

"Always," he answered; "Mahaska is the chosen of the Manitou—her words are full of wisdom."

He went away softly, as if fearing to disturb the mysterious silence of the lodge by a footfall, and Mahaska sat there in her loneliness until the night was almost spent—communing indeed with spirits, the dark, distorted shapes which rose out of the depths of her now blood-stained soul.

When she threw herself upon her couch, it was only to pursue in sleep those bloody reflections, and if the face of the dead man, the first victim in her path, rose before her, it only brought with it a fiendish exultation at her own success, and a sterner determination to carry out her schemes, however dark the way and fierce the tempest through which they might lead her.

CHAPTER III.

THE REVELATION.

A DARK plot lay buried in Mahaska's soul, of which she had as yet given no hint even to the chiefs. She intended to forsake the alliance with the French and carry the Six Nations over to the service of the English in the war then

imminent between the two powers. But the time for that action had not yet arrived, though her thoughts were constantly dwelling upon it, and after that night's thought she rose up stronger and more determined than ever, as her hatred for the French increased from the reflections which Gi-en-gwa-tah's words had aroused in her mind.

Before giving any clue to her scheme to the other chiefs, she wished to sound Gi-en-gwa-tah upon the subject and learn if it was possible that he could be brought to second her schemes. She knew how honorable he was, unlike the generality of his nation; in his eyes a pledge was sacred, and the very idea of breaking off the alliance with the French, unless some treachery or ill-treatment on their part gave reason for it, would have been abhorrent to him. Still, with all her wonderful knowledge of human nature, she did not thoroughly understand the chief; she could not give his savage mind credit for all the uprightness which it possessed; so utterly false was she herself that, with the usual weakness of such natures, she believed that every man could be induced to yield to a plan which he felt to be wrong if the personal temptation and reward were sufficiently strong.

Long before she left her girlish home in Quebec to dwell among the Indians, this idea of breaking off the alliance with the French had been paramount in her mind, and it was only the lack of opportunity which had prevented her already making such communications to the English Generals as would induce them to offer overtures to the tribes then comprised in the great Iroquois league known in history as the Six Nations, of whom it was now her scheme to become sole chief. She was not aware how strong a feeling of friendliness Gi-en-gwa-tah held toward the French, and she determined, even before he went away upon the war-path, to give him some idea of the plan in her mind under the promise of inviolable secrecy; well knowing that, however he might regard her design, she could trust his word; the most fearful tortures could not have wrung from him a secret which he had pledged himself to preserve.

There were many things besides her hatred of the French urging her on in this matter, though that was the dark foundation upon which all her plans were laid, and other desires

were faint and poor beside the craving for vengeance which filled her soul against her father's people. She felt certain that the English would aid her in her schemes if she would turn the tribes over to them—they would do their utmost to increase among the Indians a belief in her supernatural gifts, they would lavish upon her rich presents and plentiful sums of money which would make her still more powerful and more firmly settled in her sway.

All these things she was confident an alliance with the English would afford her, and she determined to enter upon her work at once. Difficulties had, for a long time, been frequent between the French and British, and she saw clearly that, ere long, they must ripen into war. It was for that she wished to be prepared.

She wanted so to work upon the minds of the leaders of the tribes that they would be ready to fall into her plans when the moment arrived; she wished the rupture to be sudden; she would deceive the French up to the last moment and then turn unexpectedly against them in some battle, and overwhelm them by this sudden onset of the savages whom they had treated as allies and friends.

Her thoughts rushed forward to the time when she might actually rush into Quebec with her train of bloodthirsty Indians, carrying desolation and death into the city of her birth. She recalled the streets and houses familiar to her girlish years; in fancy she saw them in flames and heard the death-shrieks from scores of voices that had been familiar in the past and had known only accents of friendship and affection for her. But she only remembered, with added hatred, all who had shown her kindness. Every proof of affection had stung her like a wrong. They had dared to pity her for the Indian blood which darkened her veins, and their kindness had sprung out of the commiseration they felt for her condition.

The day would come when they should be repaid with interest—when she would give back dagger-thrusts for every tender smile, and laugh at the death-agonies of those who had sought to brighten her first youth by their sympathy.

Gi-en-gwa-tah was sitting in their lodge during the early part of the day which had crowned her bloodily as queen, when she said, abruptly:

"Mahaska had strange visions last night."

He turned toward her with a face full of curiosity and interest.

"What did the voices say to Mahaska?" he asked.

"They spoke vaguely," she replied—"for Mahaska's ear alone."

He looked disappointed, and she added, in her softest voice:

"But things which Mahaska would not declare at the council, surely she may whisper to her chief; they did not forbid her to do *that*. Mahaska knows that she can trust her brave."

Gi-en-gwa-tah drew himself proudly up:

"The chief has never broken his word," he said; "that which Mahaska tells him in the secrecy of her lodge shall never be whispered to the wind outside."

"It is well," she returned; "better even than his courage Mahaska loves the chief's honor; she will trust him."

"She may do so; he will be silent as the grass over the graves of our fathers—let Gi-en-gwa-tah hear the queen's visions."

He liked to call her by that title; his nature was too noble for him to feel the slightest jealousy of her power, and even the thought which had of late crossed him of his own secondary position brought no bitterness toward her; it only made him burn to distinguish himself by greater deeds, that he might win for himself honors which should prove him worthy to have been selected as her husband.

After a few moments' pause she said, in the deep, impressive tone in which she was wont to relate her visions:

"Mahaska was not alone until almost dawn; all night the voices of her spirits filled the lodge like the sighing of the south wind; many things they told her. They are pleased that the Fox is gone. Mahaska saw him, too, at a distance; he could not approach her for her presence is sacred, but he stood far off, moaning and wringing his hands, full of suffering and misery for the trouble he tried to bring upon her. He took with him no hunting-knife, no tomahawk, into the land of shadow; he suffers from hunger and cold, and there are none to help him. All the spirits say to him: 'thus shall it befall those who plot against the queen whom Mineto has given to the Senecas.'"

Gi-en-gwa-tah shuddered at the picture she drew. Mahaska noted the effect of every word.

"They have told Mahaska that the expedition against the Delawares shall be successful. When the young men go forth Mahaska will hang a crimson plume in the door of her lodge to be worn by the brave who brings her the scalp of Shewashiet. Let Gi-en-gwa-tah take heed that no other hand than his bears off the prize."

The chief murmured some unintelligible words, but she saw by the kindling of his eyes that only the loss of his own life would prevent his claiming the guerdon. Even in that busy moment she had time to hope that this might be the end—that the warriors might come back and lay the dead body of her husband at her feet—it was to spur him to new recklessness that she suggested the prize.

"All these things they told Mahaska clearly; they showed her a future for Gi-en-gwa-tah full of glory if he aids the queen—ruin and desolation for him as well as for all who oppose her."

"The chief loves the queen," he answered with deep feeling; "the wishes of her heart are his own."

"It is well," she said again; "then let Gi-en-gwa-tah listen and heed."

He bowed his head silently and she went on:

"The voice of the great prophet came after. When he speaks Mahaska knows that the occasion is very solemn. He was angry and spoke harshly."

"Not angry with the queen?" interrupted Gi-en-gwa-tah.

"Never that," she replied; "he knows that Mahaska will always obey his commands; but the people are blind and deaf, and hard to persuade; he foresees trouble in the carrying out of his desires; but so surely as they are not fulfilled, ruin and woe will fall upon the Senecas and all the nations connected with them."

She watched him still with her eagle glance; it was necessary to startle him by those warnings before she made known her treacherous project.

"What said the prophet?" demanded Gi-en-gwa-tah.

"He says the people have followed foolish counselors; Mahaska must set them right."

"They will hear the voice of their queen," returned the chief; "they know how the prophet loves her."

"But the prophet does not love the French nation," she exclaimed, quickly; "he says they are like jays, rich in bright colors, but with many tongues and full of lies."

Gi-en-gwa-tah looked at her in trouble and astonishment, but did not reply.

"The Nations have been deceived; the French chiefs do not mean fairly by them; they will let the Iroquois fight their battles, and when they are weakened will take away their lands."

"The French chiefs have kept their word with the Nations," returned Gi-en-gwa-tah; "did Mahaska hear the prophet aright?"

A thrill of anger burned in her breast; the opposition which she had feared was rising up in the very outset.

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah listen," she said, calmly; "he only sees the faces of the French chiefs, the prophet looks into their hearts. The pale-faces will have long and bloody wars between themselves; the Indians have no cause to love either; if they are wise they will join the side which is to prove the most powerful and where they have not already been cheated by false promises."

"The Six Nations must keep their pledge," exclaimed the chief; "they have smoked the pipe of peace with the French leaders; they have taken his presents; they would be dogs if they deserted him."

"The English chiefs are very rich," said Mahaska; "they would give great sums to the Senecas; they are very powerful and will finally drive the French across the great waters."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah has found the French men brave," he replied, firmly; "they fight like great warriors; they will not be conquered nor driven away."

Mahaska could hardly restrain a movement of impatience; but she controlled herself; even her tutored face gave no sign of the tempest which had begun to rage within.

"Mahaska does not speak her own words," she said, warningly; "Gi-en-gwa-tah contradicts the words of the prophet."

"But Mahaska says he did not speak clearly; may she not be mistaken?"

"Only yesterday the chief saw the cloud-chariot which would have borne Mahaska away from her people forever if they had refused her wishes; does he doubt her *already*?"

"Gi-en-gwa-tah does not doubt; he only asks her to listen well to the voices of her spirits."

"She listens; she repeats their words; Mahaska can not twist them to please Gi-en-gwa-tah."

"No, no," he said, quickly; "Mahaska knows that the chief does not wish that. Speak, Mahaska; the prophet did not bid you tell the Nations to forsake the French?"

The question took her by surprise; she was not prepared to make a direct avowal, and remained silent for a time.

"I was bid to speak as I have," she said; "this is not the season for more words; by the time the chiefs return, Mahaska will see clearly and will then tell Gi-en-gwa-tah all."

She dropped the subject and began speaking of other things, artfully making allusions to the English, their growing power, and comparing their magnificent presents to their allies with the meager gifts which the French had bestowed upon the tribes.

Gi-en-gwa-tah was greatly disturbed by all that she had said, and left the lodge to complete his preparations for departure. He believed that Mahaska would yet be convinced of the good faith of the French. Certainly in his opinion, nothing, not even warnings from higher people, could warrant his nation in throwing aside their pacific treaty with them unless some act of faithlessness should render them justified in so doing.

"Go," muttered Mahaska, as he disappeared; "not long will I argue and barter with that fastidious savage; my foot once on his neck and I can throw off these irksome disguises, and free myself of him forever—fool! blind fool, that he is!"

She stamped upon the ground as if already feeling her victim beneath it; a spasm of fury swept over her features, so darkening and distorting them that the face no longer seemed the same which had looked so smilingly at the deluded chief.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEST OF HONOR.

ON the morning appointed, the great body of warriors departed upon their expedition, commanded by Gi-en-gwa-tah, who already had won so much distinction by his courage and success.

From the threshold of her lodge Queen Mahaska saw them file past her. She stood there, surrounded by the old chiefs, and something in the scene suggested to her mind, stored with the records of olden times, the descriptions she had read of armies in the middle ages, going forth to vindicate the cause of beauty. She smiled bitterly as the conceit passed through her thoughts, then she took a long crimson feather from her coronet, and wove it among the boughs drooping over the door of the lodge. It was a sign they all understood: the warrior who returned with the bloody trophy she had demanded, could claim the crimson plume.

When the band had disappeared, the people returned to their usual indolence, and Mahaska was left to the solitude of her lodge.

A week passed, but there was no intelligence from the absent warriors. The people began to look for their return, but Mahaska asked no questions and betrayed no interest.

At last a swift runner brought back the expected news that the Delawares had been defeated—their chief slain. The shouts of the Indians penetrated to the apartment where Mahaska was seated; she knew what they portended, but did not move. An old Indian woman, who waited upon her, swept back the draperies hastily, and looked in; but Mahaska did not appear to notice her presence, and she retreated without a word.

There she sat and waited; it mattered nothing to her upon whom the victory had fallen, so long as her husband was alive. He must henceforth be no stumbling-block in her path. She would permit nothing to mar her plans.

At length the curtains were again swept back, and the mother of her husband appeared at the opening.

"The chiefs await Queen Mahaska," she said, as her old face lit up with animation.

Mahaska rose and passed into the outer apartment, where several of the chiefs were standing.

The people shout the name of our young chief," said Upepah; "double-tongued Shewashiet will speak no more lies."

"It is well," she answered, briefly.

"The young brave has earned a right to the chieftainship of his tribe. Mahaska is his prophet," continued the old warrior.

"The crimson feather hangs over the door of Mahaska's lodge," she answered.

"It is the sign of a united power," replied the warrior.

"Mahaska will rejoice when she sees the chief whose hand will take down the plume she fastened among the leaves."

"It is Gi-en-gwa-tah's, then." The chief retired with mingled feelings of disappointment at her want of eagerness, and admiration for the pride which filled her manner.

Mahaska had been in no haste to know the name of the chief who had gained her lasting hate by fulfilling her behest. Never a warrior brought home a trophy from the war-path so dangerous and full of retribution to himself as would be Shewashiet's scalp; never a young brave snatched a token from maiden's hand so full of evil and death. The venom of the rattlesnake would not be more fatal than the doom it portended, for Mahaska was resolved to have *no* partner in her greatness.

The afternoon passed; an eager crowd went out to meet the expected band. Mahaska put aside her reflections to play her part in the scene before her. She knew well the effect that any thing attractive to the eye produced upon the savages, and never neglected an opportunity to essay it; she did not now, even in the repulsion and scorn with which her mind dwelt upon the nearing destiny before her, forget the picturesque and beautiful.

The furs hung before the opening of the lodge were thrown back, and Mahaska seated herself there, richly attired, and surrounded by the old chiefs. They all waited in silence, so

much impressed by her appearance and state that they could only watch her in mute wonder.

Again the shouts of the people went up; the chiefs leaned eagerly forward; the throng pressed more eagerly in advance; but Mahaska sat there immovable as before. The band of warriors emerged from the forest; the leader urged on his horse with all speed, and rode furiously toward the lodge. The rest of the warriors remained at a little distance; a breathless silence crept over the people, while every eye was turned upon Mahaska. She had not moved—had not even looked up.

Her young husband sprung from his horse—stood upon the threshold of the lodge and grasped the crimson plume. Mahaska raised her eyes as he took from his belt a scalp and extended it toward her, the long hair fluttering in the wind.

“Gi-en-gwa-tah brings the queen his gift,” he said, in a voice trembling with emotion; “will she take it from his hand?”

She reached forth that slender, delicate hand, grasped the gory trophy, held it aloft, and exclaimed:

“So perish all our enemies!”

The throng answered with exultant exclamations. The young chief stood before her, holding the crimson feather in his hand, unable to control the eagerness which shook his frame. Mahaska turned toward the group of old men about her:

“The chiefs behold,” she said; “the Great Spirit has favored Gi-en-gwa-tah! So shall it be with all who obey Mahaska, and who seek to work her bidding out of love.”

She stood smiling up in the face of her husband, while many a murderous thought seethed through her brain. The delicate fingers that held the scalp quivered with eagerness to hold a yet dearer trophy, which, once in her grasp, would leave her pathway unfettered.

The warriors left the two standing on the threshold of their lodge, and marched away toward the village, raising a shout of triumph that echoed across the lake, and died like a wind in the depths of the wilderness.

“Is Mahaska glad that her chief won her prize?” he asked, holding up the graceful feather.

"Does not Gi-en-gwa-tah know her heart?" she asked. "Mahaska can not make vows and use childish words like common women; she is set apart from them by a sacred spell; let Gi-en-gwa-tah be content that she sits beside him in his lodge."

"The chief's heart has been lonely without her," he said, earnestly; "he knows her to be a great prophetess, but, to his love she is a woman, and he pines for her presence as he would for the sunshine during a long night."

She was in no mood for listening to such words; she had been buoying herself up with false hopes too long not to feel their disappointment; it was enough to have the misery of seeing him return a victor without being obliged to submit to evidences of his affection.

"The queen has many things on her mind," she said, coldly; "she can not talk with Gi-en-gwa-tah now."

He looked at her in sorrowful surprise.

"Is Mahaska in haste to quit the chief?" he asked. "He has been gone so many days, and she sends him from her now."

She made an impatient gesture.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah must pay the penalty of his greatness," she said; "is there a chief in the tribe that would not obey Mahaska's wishes to be in his place? Mahaska hears voices—she must obey them."

Without another word she left him alone, so full of sad thoughts after the triumph he had expected, that his heart was chilled to the core.

CHAPTER V.

THE PALACE AND ITS FURNITURE.

THE chief's love for his wife was a feeling so powerful that all others had fallen into insignificance beside it. To please and gratify her were the highest wishes he had, and, in spite of her white blood, her education, she might well have been proud of his love.

His personal advantages were very great; he was one of the handsomest men in the tribe, a bold, manly type of beauty, and had always been regarded as the most prominent among the young chiefs. He was open and honest to a degree astonishing in an Indian, with a regard for his word which no temptation could have forced him to break, his whole character presenting a strange contrast to that of Mahaska, whose highest action was dictated by craft, and whose promises were only meant to deceive.

When she first came among them she had ordered the building of a stone mansion, by the lake, which she styled her palace, and had carried out her plans in spite of all difficulties.

"Where should the queen live?" she asked. "Is Mahaska a squaw that Gi-en-gwa-tah should give her a bark wigwam? Yonder by the lake stands the unfinished walls of her lodge; the queen will not have full faith in the chief until he urges on her wishes and makes his lazy people toil to complete it."

She would have no further discussion, and anxious to gratify her the chief urged on the work with new zeal and haste, and every morning when Mahaska looked out upon it, she could see her new mansion assuming habitable shape. At length the palace, as she loved to call it, was completed—the wonder and admiration of the whole tribe, who had labored so faithfully in its construction.

It was now autumn; the forest wore the latest glory of its gorgeous coloring. Already the leaves lay strewn like a rich carpet about the paths of the wilderness; the wind caught a deeper and more mournful tone, but the air was still balmy and soft, for the sunlight lay warm and pleasant over the beautiful lake. It seemed as if the soft autumn weather was lingering to the latest moment, unwilling to yield the last traces of its beauty to the chill embrace and desolation of winter.

Meanwhile Mahaska was floating on toward the full tide of success in her schemes; her control over the people increased in a manner that was magical, and the brave Gi-en-gwa-tah, with all his bravery, was chief among her adherents and her servitors. The nature of this untutored savage appeared lifted out of itself by the love which filled his heart; reason

did not control his feelings, for Mahaska, as a woman, was so entirely set apart from all other women that reverence and worship appeared her due. She was satisfied with her influence over him, but her quick perception perceived one fact—if the fulfillment of her wishes stood between him and that which his stern sense of honor considered just, she was certain to meet the most resolute opposition in her husband. When that reflection occurred, the repulsion which she had from the first harbored toward the chief, gained strength. But there was no trace of these feelings in her manner; she grew more gentle and considerate, and fairly dazzled his strong senses with the numberless fascinations she cast about him.

Gi-en-gwa-tah was sorely troubled in his mind concerning the manner in which the new dwelling was to be arranged. He had visited Quebec, seen luxurious dwellings in several other cities, and knew what Mahaska had a right to expect; but the attainment of his wishes was not easily reached. He consulted with his intimate friends, and they held long conversations, which would have amused and astonished those accustomed only to the stern, hard side of the Indian character.

Gi-en-gwa-tah owned a rich store of furs and sundry valuables which he had received from white traders in return for skins, and it was decided between the two that these should go toward the adornment of the mansion, although the chief was, by no means, satisfied, and his old mother, Meme, who had now become an inmate of his lodge, according to the usage of the tribe, took a true feminine delight in adding to his perplexities. She had promised to keep his secret faithfully, and above all not to reveal to Mahaska the doubts which disturbed his mind; but the old woman soon found an excuse for informing her son's wife of every word he had said the first time they were alone.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah fears that Mahaska will pine for the luxuries that the pale-faces love," she said.

"The queen has a right to live like a sovereign," she answered; "would they have her sit on the ground like a squaw of burthen?"

"Gi-en-gwa-tah has many furs; he will make cushions for Mahaska; the fire-places in her great lodge would each hold a wigwam."

"The Great Spirit will send all that the queen needs," said Mahaska.

The old woman looked at her wondering. She firmly believed in the supernatural destiny of her new-found daughter.

"The Great Spirit will send power and victories," she said.

"He will also send all that Mahaska requires," persisted Mahaska. "Mahaska has her visions; they warn her of all that will happen."

"And will there come gifts like those of the governor-chief?" she asked, in surprise.

Mahaska made a quick gesture; any allusion to her old life always enraged her—the mention of a single name linked with the past shook her self-control to its center.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah's mother babbles like a blind squaw," she said, contemptuously; "is she growing a child again?" then she added, quickly: "let Gi-en-gwa-tah cease to trouble his mind. Such gifts as he has let him carry into the queen's palace; when the time arrives all that she wishes will follow."

The woman could not restrain her curiosity.

"When were these things promised to Mahaska?"

"Is it for Meme to question concerning the revelation of the Great Spirit?" she demanded.

"Mahaska speaks wisely," she replied; "Meme will seek to learn no more."

"She shall see the palace blossom like the wilderness in summer," said Mahaska; "it shall become sacred among the Nations because it will be filled with gifts from the Manitou."

"May Meme repeat these things to Gi-en-gwa-tah?"

"Let her tell him all; what the queen has been promised shall come to pass before he leads her to the dwelling."

It was the most bewildering thing that had ever happened to the old woman—she could not in the least comprehend it; but she placed the utmost faith in Mahaska's words and waited patiently for their fulfillment.

She went back to the chief, and, without revealing her betrayal of his confidence, told him of Mahaska's words, which filled his mind with wonder equal to her own.

Gradually it crept about among the people that the Great Spirit had promised to send rich gifts to their queen, and they regarded her with new awe and reverence.

There was more truth in the queen's assertion concerning the promised gifts than appeared probable; although she certainly did not base her expectations upon any supernatural agency. She was left free in her actions; the only person who ever watched her movements was Gi-en-gwa-tah, and he did it only from the restlessness of his great affection. She was accustomed to take long rides in solitude—to row upon the lake night or day; but she did not fail to give even these relaxations a mysterious signification. She told the Indians that spirit-voices spoke to her, and in the wind that rocked her canoe upon the moonlit waters she held communion with the shade of her ancestor, the great prophet, Nemono. By these means she secured herself against intrusion; even Gi-en-gwa-tah would not have ventured to watch her movements at such times, for fear of bringing the anger of the Manitou upon himself by intruding upon those religious rites which he had been taught to venerate.

We have spoken of the plot which from the first had been forming in her mind to win the Six Nations from their alliance with the French, and carry their power over to the English in the warfare then imminent. This desire had been seconded in the most unexpected manner, while she was revolving means for obtaining communication with the English leaders. Her advent among the Indians already was a subject of much curiosity with the whites, and a politic English Governor determined to do every thing in his power to win her good offices in bringing to his side the assistance of the Indian tribes then pledged to the interests of the French.

Mahaska had gone out to ride in the forest; she was miles beyond the Indian village, galloping wildly along, feeling a sort of relief in the swift pace and freedom from all human observation. Suddenly a form started up before her in the path; she checked her horse and instinctively her right hand clenched the tomahawk which she always carried in her girdle, although she supposed it to be some one of her own tribe who had wandered there upon a hunting expedition. The savage made signs of friendly greeting and approached her horse. As he drew near she recognized a half-breed whom she had known at Quebec—a man afterward discovered to be an English spy, but who had escaped punishment by a dextrous flight.

"Rene," she called in French; "Rene."

He bounded toward her, and with elaborate signs of respect began pouring forth a volley of delight at seeing her again.

"What brings you here?" she asked, checking his compliments.

"The desire to see Mahaska once more," he answered.

She smiled, then darted a stern glance at him.

"You are an English spy," she said; "the Indians are friendly with the French; have you come to carry back information concerning their movements?"

"No, lady; the Virgin is my witness, no."

"If you were discovered and recognized they would put you to death."

"But the queen would protect me; you would not let them harm poor Rene," he said, humbly.

"Why should I interfere? What interest can I have in your life?"

"Because I have endangered it in seeking you," he replied; "you would not allow an humble messenger to be molested."

"You were seeking *me*?" she repeated.

He made a gesture of assent.

"And a messenger, you say? From whom? What do you want?"

He drew close to her horse; she still kept her hand on the hilt of her tomahawk, watching his movements with her eagle glance, but evinced no fear.

"Can I speak openly?" he almost whispered. "Is there no one to overhear me?"

"We are quite alone; tell me your errand at once."

"I have a letter for you, lady; I was to place it in your own hands with all secrecy. Wait—you shall see how Rene fulfills the commands of those who employ him."

He thrust his hand into his hunting-shirt and tore it open at the breast; made a slit in the lining with his knife and drew out a sealed package.

"There it is," he said; "it will tell you all you wish to know."

Mahaska grasped the letter, feeling confident that in some way this epistle would aid her schemes. She motioned the

spy to retire, and he crept away to some distance with the stealthy tread which had become natural to him.

Mahaska allowed the reins to fall upon the neck of her well-trained steed, and broke the seal of the letter. Still she did not relinquish her vigilance; her quick ear caught the least movement of the half-breed as if it were some artfully-spread snare she was quite ready to meet. But the instant her eyes fell upon the writing her suspicions vanished, for she recognized the signature of the English Governor.

The letter was long and artfully written, making it appear for her interest to bring the Indians over to the English. There were liberal promises of gifts and money—messengers were waiting her answer to set forth at once to consult with her.

Mahaska folded up the letter and concealed it in her bosom. For a few moments she yielded herself to the reflections called up by this new opening for her schemes of vengeance. She, however, soon aroused herself and turned toward the half-breed.

"Can you come to my lodge to-night for the answer?" she asked.

"Yes, lady."

"But if you are seen you will be scalped before I can interpose."

"Rene can skulk like a fox," he said; "there is no danger."

"Then come after midnight; you will find me at the entrance and will carry the letter I shall give you to the English Governor without loss of time."

He bowed in silence; she gathered up the reins and galloped swiftly back toward the village.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMBASSY AND THE MIRACLE.

It was a beautiful night, several weeks after the interview with Rene, in the wood. The moon was full, the air singularly pleasant and soft, and the whole scene so full of tranquil beauty, in spite of its wildness, that it seemed impossible it should not bring repose to the most troubled heart. On the morrow Gi-en-gwa-tah was to lead Queen Mahaska to her new mansion, and the whole village had retired early to rest in anticipation of the coming festivities, given in honor of the completion of the royal structure.

During the day, old Meme had stolen up to the rise of ground close by the lake where the stone dwelling stood, to see if Mahaska's words had been fulfilled. She went through the different rooms, but there was nothing to be seen except the gifts which the Indian chief, her son, had brought there. The old woman was greatly disappointed, but said nothing, and for the rest of the day the dwelling was left deserted and silent.

Mahaska had signified to her that, on that night, she must be left alone; she was going out upon the lake to receive the last instructions of the spirits who made her wise with their counsels.

This information crept among the tribe, and every one avoided approaching her lodge after nightfall. Hence she was left to the undisturbed freedom which she desired.

Mahaska sat quietly in her lodge till the hands of a little watch she always carried pointed to midnight; then she rose, wrapped her mantle about her, and passed into the open air. She walked rapidly down to the shore of the lake, where her canoe was moored—a light, graceful bark, which Gi-en-gwa-tah had constructed for her with unusual elegance and care. Seating herself in the canoe, she paddled noiselessly up the lake.

About half a mile beyond her new palace there was a high bluff, projecting over the waters and crowned with lofty trees.

That was the point of her destination. As she neared this spot she ceased paddling, and sent a low whistle, like the cry of a bird, across the water. It was answered by a similar sound; then she rowed rapidly toward the cliff.

As the boat approached the shore, she saw canoes drawn up under the shadow of the ledge, and a little knot of men stood awaiting her arrival.

With one vigorous sweep she sent her canoe on the beach, rose slowly, gathered her mantle about her, and stepped on shore.

Two of the men came forward to meet her; in the third her quick glance recognized the half-breed. The pair who awaited her were both young men still, but in spite of the hunting-shirts and leggins, there was an air of high-breeding and command about them which betrayed their rank.

They greeted Mahaska with a courteous salutation, and she could see the surprise they felt at her appearance as she appeared so suddenly before them in the soft moonlight, in the full power of her grace and loveliness. They were astounded by her beauty, and soon were enchanted with her graces.

"I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Colonel St. Clair and Captain Stuart," she said, in her most winning voice, speaking in English, and with an ease which only perfect familiarity with the language could have given.

Each bowed in turn as his name was mentioned, and she added, lightly, though not abating an inch of her state:

"I am grieved that I should have been forced to receive you so unceremoniously, gentlemen; one day I shall hope to greet you with the distinction such guests deserve. At present we meet almost as conspirators."

"We are only too much honored, lady, by your consenting to meet us at all," said Colonel St. Clair.

She looked keenly at him; the tone was honest and sincere.

"Your General, then, received my answer to his letter without delay?" she said.

"He did, madam, and dispatched us on the instant to arrange with you concerning a variety of matters which must be considered should your plans succeed. He regretted

exceedingly that he could not make this visit in person, and thus secure himself the pleasure of an interview with one of whom report speaks such marvels, and yet falls so far short of the reality."

"I should have been most happy to receive his visit," Mahaska replied; "it will be a pleasure in anticipation. I owe him many thanks for making his absence less felt by the choice he made of his ambassadors."

There was a little further exchange of compliments, and then they entered upon the business which brought them there. The two officers were refined, nobly-born men, accustomed to association with those of high birth, but never, even among royalty, had they met more polished grace and courtesy than this woman exhibited, standing alone in the wilderness. Then the vigor and keenness of her intellect was felt in the propositions she laid down, and her woman's vanity taught her when and how to wander from the theme, and give an opportunity to display glimpses of her wonderful information, and of the sparkling wit of which she was capable. They remained conversing for a long time; at last it was necessary that the conference should be broken up.

"Our General has ventured to send with us a few offerings as a token of his friendship and esteem," said St. Clair, "which he begged me to present to you."

Mahaska's keen eyes had taken note of the three heavily loaded boats, and understood that the artful suggestions in her letter had been acted upon.

"Whatever they may be," she said, "they will prove welcome, as a friendly recognition from your brave General."

"We are in a little perplexity as to the means of disposing of them," said St. Clair, laughing, and yet feeling as much embarrassed as if she had not been half Indian, and standing in the depths of her native wilderness.

"I can trust no one as yet," she answered. "The whole transaction must remain a secret, or I would send men here to take them to my home."

"Can we not do it, madam?" he asked; "can we not row over to it?"

"Yes; it is not far and stands almost upon the shore."

She pointed to the stone front of her dwelling, which shone out grandly in the moonlight.

"It is hardly gracious to make you perform such an office," she said.

"It becomes an honor in your service," he replied; "besides, we have our boatmen below."

"Then, since you are so kind, I will go on in advance and show you the way," she said.

They conducted her to her canoe, and set rapidly off in the wake of silver that flashed under her paddles.

They landed on the shore, close by one of the entrances to her mansion, and began unloading the countless packages which crowded the boats. Mahaska stood by, apologizing gracefully, but in her heart she was delighted at forcing these two proud pale-faces to superintend work which should have belonged to the meanest workmen—even in so slight a thing, it was a pleasure to humble any of the hated race.

Mahaska threw open the doors, and ushered them into her dwelling. All manner of gifts which could conduce to her comfort were soon crowded into the rooms: rich coverings; piles of cushions; silken draperies; costly sets of china and plate—every thing which it had been possible to bring that could be expected to afford gratification, was suddenly thrown from the midst of luxury and refinement into the wildness of savage life. Then St. Clair drew from his breast a casket and placed it in her hands. She raised the lid, and the precious stones it contained flashed in the moonlight.

She smiled with keen satisfaction. She might have endured bare floors, coarse viands, all the nakedness of savage existence, but she was growing avaricious—eager to heap up stores of gold and gems, not from a miserly feeling, but because such treasures were tangible evidences of power.

"I am overwhelmed by such profusion," she said; "there are no thanks that could express a shadow of a return. Tell your General, Mahaska could not be bought either by gold or jewels; but the thoughtfulness and friendship exhibited in the choice of his gifts have won her heart forever."

"He will be rejoiced to hear your message," returned St. Clair, "and I am sure that this alliance can be made equally useful to both the English and yourself. Besides, the General

was anxious personally to open communication with a lady already so much talked of throughout the land."

"These are early days," said Mahaska, proudly; "let them wait, and see what time shall bring forth. Your Governor and I, at all events, are bound together by the closest ties that can ever knit human hearts—mutual interests, and mutual hate of a common enemy."

They did not understand the import of her words, and looked somewhat surprised.

"Our hatred for the French," she continued, answering the expression in their faces. "Talk of the power of love! There is no feeling binds human beings so closely as a common hate!"

Then, fearful that her words and tone had revealed too much ferocity, she hastened to speak of other things, careful to do nothing which would send them away with an unfavorable opinion.

"I wish I had some token to send your General," she said; "but, alas, what could I find in this wild domain which would give him pleasure?"

"If I might venture to suggest," said St. Clair, hesitatingly.

"Well, sir?" she asked, in her sweetest voice. "Surely I can not be so terrible that you need hesitate."

"If you had a portrait of yourself that you would permit me to take back to the General, it would make him a proud and happy man."

"What!" she exclaimed, smiling still, though her voice rung out a shade less soft, "would you have a picture of the Indian queen that your nation might look at it and say, 'This is the panther of the forest?'"

"Madam, you wrong our gallantry and our manhood by the doubt."

"Truly, I think so," she answered. "Let me see—let me see. I have a miniature of myself—yes, you shall send Rene for it soon. I shall have news for you then. It is the face of a mere girl; but, tell the Governor, when he looks at it, to remember that it is a pledge of the woman's sincerity."

"Many, many thanks," returned St. Clair. "Now, madam, permit us to take our leave. The night is wearing on, and we have a long journey before us."

"Farewell, then, gentlemen. Believe me, you have bound me to you by this night's work. I may one day be able to give you a proof of my friendship."

"The knowledge that we possess it is good fortune enough," they answered.

They bent over the hand she extended, and, with more words of courtesy, passed out of her presence.

Mahaska stood in the hall where she had parted from her visitors, till the softly-handled oars died away on the lake. Then, without more delay, she began, by the light of the moon which filled the apartment with its radiance, to complete the task which lay before her.

Gi-en-gwa-tah had instructed the Indians to make chairs and sofas for the new dwelling—rough seats of hewn wood; but Mahaska speedily hid their uncouthness with the rich cushions the Englishmen had brought. She arranged Gi-en-gwa-tah's furs with excellent taste, draped the windows, and before the day broke, had restored every thing to order, and wrought a transformation so complete in the mansion that it seemed like the work of magic.

When all was prepared, she sought her canoe and rowed back to her lodge, to await the influence of her night's work.

Early in the morning Mahaska was aroused by a crowd of women, who had left their wigwams early in order to witness the miracle which Gi-en-gwa-tah's mother had whispered abroad as likely to follow Mahaska's removal to her stone house. They found the young chief preparing Mahaska's canoe for an early sail to the stately residence. His wife had said nothing to him about her hopes of spiritual assistance in beautifying her residence; and, though he had heard the rumor, he deemed it only female gossip, which prevailed in that remote Indian village just as actively as it is to be found in our cities of the present day.

The sun was up, and cresting all the little wavelets on the lake with golden flashes, when Mahaska appeared in the door of her lodge. The women gathered around her, clamorous for information regarding her night-visions. She looked fresh and blooming as if she had spent the whole night in healthful slumber.

"Mahaska had beautiful dreams," she said, smiling. "All

night the prophet whispered great things in her ear. She is glad at heart."

Gi-en-gwa-tah came up while she was speaking; he had cushioned her canoe with furs and lined it with scarlet cloth which fell over its edges like a fringe. It looked like a cradle on the soft swell of the waters, inviting her to enter. In his rude way, Gi-en-gwa-tah had furnished his rude dwelling, but he felt anxious, and dissatisfied with the effect. Could he have carpeted the floor with ermine, and made her couches of ebony, the generous savage would have done it. Indeed, the furs which he had lavished on her new home would have almost bought the furnishing of a palace; but their value was nothing to him so long as they remained only a type of savage life.

But Mahaska had no misgivings. Bright, cheerful and queenly, she stepped into the canoe and sat down among the furs, beautiful as Cleopatra in her barge. Gi-en-gwa-tah placed himself opposite her in the little craft, and, followed by a dozen other canoes, crossed to the slope of land on which the stone mansion was built. There a crowd met them—chiefs, warriors, and women—all forming a picturesque escort to the young couple as they left the canoe and walked up to the front entrance.

The door was opened by Gi-en-gwa-tah's mother, who uttered a cry of delighted surprise as she crossed the threshold. Mahaska entered smiling, but the young chief paused in the first room, mute with astonishment. The walls, bare and black the night before, were now covered with brilliant hangings, which fell from light, gilded cornices; small carpets covered the center of the floor, and fur rugs were scattered about; the rude tables were overspread with gorgeously-wrought covers, and on the mantel were tall silver candlesticks, from which tapers of tinted wax beamed with a rich promise of light.

Mahaska turned to her husband, smiling:

"Mineto is good; he has sent his spirits to work for us in the night. This is not our palace, but a great medicine-lodge which we are to inhabit for the good of our people."

Gi-en-gwa-tah could not speak; surprise had struck him dumb.

Mahaska looked around the room with an air of queenly satisfaction. A great oaken chest, clamped with brass, stood in the room. She lifted the lid, revealing a glittering store of beads, knives, gorgeous stuffs and embroidered blankets. She filled her arms with these things and went forth among the people on the lawn, to whom she distributed them generously, buying golden opinions with every lift of her hand.

"It is the great Mineto who sends them to his chosen tribe; see what care he takes of my people."

The savages gave their simple hearts to this woman, whose powers they considered divine.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST STORM.

SOME new trouble had again broken out with a neighboring tribe, and Gi-en-gwa-tah went with a band of warriors to desolate their territory.

Mahaska, ever on the alert, perceived that a favorable moment had arrived for bringing the great body of chiefs to her views in regard to the English alliance. She had been craftily at work for weeks, but now she intended to urge her cause with boldness.

Delegates from several of the Six Nations chanced to be there, and that, added to the absence of Gi-en-gwa-tah, rendered the time a favorable one for acting promptly. She feared the honest rectitude of the chief, and knew that he would have great influence among the people; so she trusted to having matters so far settled before his return that any opposition on his part would prove useless.

The old chiefs were debating about the council-fire upon some unimportant matter. She sent them word, by one of her honorary body-guard, that she was coming to hold a consultation. Mahaska had appropriated to herself a guard of one hundred warriors, to be always at her command. When she wished to go upon the war-path the band swelled to twice

that number, and, during all the after years of her life, it was a mark of high distinction to be chosen a member of that body.

She had not yet gone personally into battle, though the time came when there was no carnage in which she did not take part—when for years and years her very name was a sickening terror among the whites, and the sight of one of the white queen's private guard was a signal for coming slaughter which knew neither distinction nor mercy.

She presented herself among the chiefs, who received her with all possible honor, and waited to hear her errand.

"Queen Mahaska's sleep has been troubled for many nights," she said; "her visions have been vague and indistinct; but, of late, her ancestor, the prophet Nemono, has spoken clearly to her again, and bid her speak words of wisdom to the chiefs."

They bowed their heads, saying:

"We will hear the words of the great prophet."

"For many, many moons," continued Mahaska, "the Six Nations have been friends with the French; they have aided them in their wars, and have given their young men to die for them; they have helped them to preserve power and dominion to which they had no right. Is it not true? Let the chiefs answer."

"It is true," they said with one voice.

"But what have the French done in return for the red-men?" she went on, her voice deepening and her form dilating with new majesty. "They have offered many promises, but Mahaska can find no trace of their fulfillment. They have taken lands which were yours; they have treated your young men harshly; they have refused to buy your furs at honest prices—was this the conduct of *friends*? They laugh at you; they say that the chiefs are old squaws to be cheated with presents of tobacco and beads. Mahaska has dwelt among them; she knows their thoughts. They will spurn you like dogs when you have worked their bidding! Have the Six Nations no warriors that they submit to such insults?"

She hurried on with a passionate speech which carried her hearers blindly along the stream of her eloquence. She urged upon them the advantages of an alliance with the English,

assuring them that it was desired by the prophet. She threatened them with the anger of the Great Spirit if they refused to obey, and, at length, worked them up to a pitch of enthusiasm which rendered them ready and willing to concede to her desires.

Three chiefs were appointed as a delegation to confer with the English Governor, from whom Mahaska had received such offers of friendship. She sent by them letters of instruction to the British authorities, and when every thing was done that was necessary to her plans she awaited Gi-en-gwa-tah's return with composure, satisfied that it was then too late for him to demur to her schemes with any success.

The war-party came back at last, and when Gi-en-gwa-tah learned what had happened during his absence he was greatly troubled, and burning with indignation. He called a council at once, and made a speech full of feeling and honor to the chiefs, which was coldly received. During his absence Mahaska quietly and subtly had done much to undermine his influence; he was, therefore, totally at a loss to account for the change he perceived among his people.

He sought the queen with his mind full of bitterness. She understood these signs of discontent the moment she looked in his face, and said, coldly:

"Gi-en-gwa-tah brings back more frowns than scalps from the war-path."

The cutting sarcasm increased his irritation.

"The queen has done an evil thing," he said, gloomily; "she has listened to the voice of lying spirits."

Mahaska sprung to her feet in sudden fury. She had grown so accustomed to undisputed sway that even the slightest opposition roused her to terrible passion.

"Who comes into Mahaska's presence with false words?" she cried. "Has Gi-en-gwa-tah drank too much fire-water on his bloodless war-path that he enters here with such folly on his tongue?"

"Gi-en-gwa-tah speaks wisely," he answered, with quiet dignity. "The French are our brothers; Mahaska should not have urged the chiefs to break their long-respected pledge."

"Is Gi-en-gwa-tah to come between the queen and her dreams?" she demanded. "Mahaska hears the words of

wisdom from the lips of the great prophet—can Gi-en-gwa-tah translate them better than she? Let him beware how he opposes the wishes of the Manitou—how he brings shame on Mahaska!”

The chief looked in astonishment at the rage in her countenance—she was beginning to drop the mask which she had worn since their marriage.

“The red-men have no complaint to make against the French,” he urged.

“Let Gi-en-gwa-tah go and sew wampum with the squaws!” she insolently exclaimed. “He has not the spirit of a chief.”

The chief’s haughty spirit rose to meet her own at this insult, and he answered:

“The queen speaks biting words because she is a woman. Gi-en-gwa-tah can not fling them back in return.”

Her rage kindled more hotly at the response, and she exclaimed, in a low, terrible voice:

“Gi-en-gwa-tah’s feet are on hollow ground—let him take heed lest it give way under him.”

“What does Mahaska mean?” he demanded, quickly.

“That the people will cease to be the slaves of the false-tongued French; that, if Gi-en-gwa-tah does not join the other chiefs, he will lose caste in the tribe.”

“Gi-en-gwa-tah will not consent to a wrong,” he said; “he will tell the people that they are deceived.”

“And Mahaska will go among them and say: ‘Regard that man—you desired him to be the husband of the queen whom you have revered and obeyed; he comes to you and says that her visions are false—her words those of lying spirits!’ Follow me to the council-fire—speak, and Mahaska will answer; *come!*”

She made a movement as if to rush away at once, but the chief did not move. His head sunk upon his breast—his face was dark with sorrowful thoughts. The idea of strife between himself and his idolized wife was terrible to him; he was perplexed and sorely at a loss how to act. He could not bear to think that this injustice should go on until the Six Nations had betrayed their trust, and proved themselves false to their pledges; yet, at the same time, it cut him to the heart to act in opposition to Mahaska’s wishes. He was too simple

mindful and too full of his first love for her to think, as yet, that she could wittingly be acting a treacherous part. He had felt the most implicit faith in her prophecies. It was not her truth he suspected, but he feared that she had been deceived by some false dream-spirit.

"Why does not Gi-en-gwa-tah follow?" cried Mahaska, tauntingly. "Let him go among the people and tell them that their queen is a child—that she deceives herself and them—why does he not come?"

"Gi-en-gwa-tah only asks his wife to reflect."

"Mahaska's thoughts are like the flight of an eagle," she interrupted; "and they fly alway toward the sun—Gi-en-gwa-tah's thoughts are like owls that doze while others act."

He was greatly irritated by her open contempt and unrestrained sarcasm, but he still answered with grave dignity that expressed far more sorrow than anger.

"When the chiefs return from their mission we will hold council again," he said; "bitter words will not bring wisdom either to Gi-en-gwa-tah or the queen."

"The Six Nations shall obey Mahaska," cried the infuriated woman, cold and terrible in her rage; "sorrow and desolation shall smite him who opposes her! The race of Gi-en-gwa-tah shall become extinct—the children he hopes for, to be sunshine in his old age, shall rise up to curse him. Let him beware; he struggles against the Great Spirit; he will be uprooted like a pine tree smitten by the tempest."

She looked a heathen prophetess inspired by her deity; her hands were outstretched, her form erect, her eyes blazing with passion. In spite of his firmness the chief was greatly troubled by her words.

"Mahaska's heart has gone away from the chief," he said, mournfully.

Words of deeper scorn rose to her lips. Her first impulse was to rush forth among the people, denounce him as a traitor and a coward and rouse all their fury against him. But she checked herself; it was better to wait. The people's attachment to him was very great, and she might injure her own influence by too sudden action.

She therefore changed her demeanor; assumed a kindlier air; sat down by him and conversed more quietly—using all

her arts to blind his clear judgment—appealing to his love—exercising unmercifully her great control over his mind; but through it all, the honest dictates of his soul broke through and through her schemes, and, in spite of the pleadings of his heart, refused to be convinced.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EMBASSADRESS AND THE MOTHER.

BEFORE the winter set in Mahaska conceived the project of making a visit around among the several powerful tribes constituting the Six Nations, hoping by the influence of her presence to increase still more her power and to aid the furtherance of the ambitious projects which had formed in her wily brain. She was accompanied on her journey by Gi-en-gwa-tah and several of the principal chiefs, escorted by her body-guard, and all the state and pomp which she commanded was freely displayed.

Among all the Nations she was received with every demonstration of respect; all sorts of festivities were instituted in her honor and her counsels were listened to with profound attention.

Her plans in regard to the English alliance were working well. The delegates had returned with highly favorable reports, and Mahaska wrote to the Governor, that, come when it might, the next struggle would see the Six Nations in alliance with the British.

She managed artfully to hold consultations with the chiefs concerning this matter during every absence of Gi-en-gwa-tah, and succeeded in establishing the impression that he was weak and vacillating, at the same time that his ambition was inordinate and could not endure to witness the success of men superior to himself. Yet, while she was thus undermining his future, the noble savage was aiding in every way to extend her power. The freshness of his love came back at the sight of her beauty and the admiration she excited, and he forgot

entirely the glimpses he had of late caught of the terrible spirit that lay hidden under that gracious exterior.

Nothing could surpass the graciousness of the queen during her journey. She knew only too well how to assume the appearance of generosity. She made beautiful presents to the chiefs and their wives, scattered her profuseness right and left, and, as she quitted each tribe in succession, was followed by the love and wonder of their untutored minds. She seemed to them like a being suddenly descended among them from a higher sphere. They were never weary of gazing upon her beauty. She dazzled their eyes with her rich attire and the costly goods which had been the price of her treachery toward the French.

The snow began to fall heavily when Mahaska returned to her tribe and again established herself in her palace by the Seneca lake. Her friend, the English Governor, had furnished her with new gifts and her dwelling was now replete with every article of comfort and luxury. She had instructed the Indian women who performed the duties of servants in many things which relieved her from the coarseness of savage life, and the sumptuous table spread in her house would have done credit to the most civilized household.

A year had passed—it had swept Mahaska far into the darkness of her new career, and left many a stain of blood upon her soul which blotted out the last trace of her youth forever. But a change came which, had she been a woman of ordinary womanly instincts, would have subdued her fierce nature. She sat in her palace crowned with the priceless blessing of maternity. And her daring soul did soften under its tender influence.

Love for her child became for the time the one redeeming feeling of her life, yet, like all emotions in her nature, it received a sort of ferocity from its very strength. She pictured to herself a grand future for her boy; he should be skilled in all the arts and knowledge of the whites, while hatred toward his grandfather's race would be the only faith she impressed upon his soul.

The day her child was a month old she had made the occasion one of high festival among the people, and she sat with her babe upon her knees listening to the rejoicings that went

up from the revelers without. Gi-en-gwa-tah was absent at the birth of his child and had not yet returned, but his arrival was daily expected. Mahaska was full of savage joy in his absence, for the child had been all hers for a time at least. She could not bear the idea of witnessing his love for it, and dreaded with intense selfishness that the time might come when her boy would give affection in return, to the brave savage that had been forced into her life.

"Never," she muttered; "he is all mine. No one shall share his love—the savage who claims him shall have no part in my treasure."

Saying these words she pressed her lips upon the forehead of the sleeping babe as if registering a vow, so wickedly did she mingle evil thought with the tenderest and holiest feelings that our human nature can possess.

While she sat thus nursing her child with womanly seeming, the door was flung open, and, with a quick, joyous tread, Gi-en-gwa-tah entered the apartment.

Mahaska started so violently that the babe was disturbed in his slumber, and uttered a faint cry that smote her heart like a sudden blow; and she grew inwardly furious to see the man she so bitterly hated looking down upon her and her child with an expression of such absorbing love, claiming participation in her joy.

He bent over her, his dark, noble features aglow with emotion, his eyes misty with the new tenderness which overflowed his heart.

"Mahaska—Mahaska!"

He could speak no other words. He bent over her, encircling his wife and child in his arms. She drove back the bitter tide that surged up from her heart, and forced herself to greet him with an appearance of pleasure.

"Mahaska and her boy have been waiting for days," she said; "the chief has been long in returning."

"The days have seemed like years to Gi-en-gwa-tah," he answered; "he had left his heart here and was like one in the dark till he could come back and find it."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah speaks pleasantly like the south wind," she returned, with a smile; "he has been studying the flowery language of the pale-faces."

"It is his heart that speaks! Mahaska has not pined because this little flower opened its eyes to console her for the chief's absence."

She held up the babe to his admiring gaze.

"Is he not brave and beautiful?" she cried.

The chief looked at him with a sort of wonder, not daring even to touch his new treasure; so full of strange thoughts which he could not fathom that he was quite speechless. The babe awoke and looked around; his large black eyes dwelt wonderingly on the chief.

"See how brave he looks," said Mahaska; "the chief will find a great warrior in his son."

"Mahaska will be happy and content now," he said, gravely.

"She was so before," replied the young mother.

"Sometime her face was sad—the wilderness was dark and made her youth gloomy."

"It is Mahaska's home," she replied; "she is among her people and asks no more."

He looked fondly down upon her, with a betrayal of feeling which habit did not often permit him to reveal.

"The people are more drawn toward their queen than ever," he said; "she can stir their hearts as the wind ruffles the water."

She smiled proudly. Better than he did she understand the power in her hands; his generous nature could not conceive the use which she intended to make of it.

"The chief has heard that before many moons the tribe will go out on the war-path," she said.

He bowed his head.

"This time Mahaska will lead them," she exclaimed; "she is weary of leading the life of a squaw."

He looked at her in astonishment.

"The queen will do more wisely to stay at home and consult with the old chiefs," he said; "her wisdom will aid the warriors."

Her eyes flashed; she laid the babe down upon her knees again.

"The Great Spirit has warned Mahaska," she said; "will Gi-en-gwa-tah teach her duty after that?"

He was silent, and she went on:

"Mahaska will lead forth the warriors; the people shall

see that she is great in the battle-field as at the council-fire. Her soul thirsts for action; she will work out brave deeds with her own tomahawk."

He attempted further expostulation, but she cried out:

"Is Gi-en-gwa-tah ashamed to fight by the side of a woman? Does he think Mahaska a coward?"

"Gi-en-gwa-tah loves Mahaska; he fears for her safety."

"Nothing can harm her when she is protected by the Great Spirit," she answered; "her enemies will flee her path like dust before the whirlwind. The prophet has spoken, and the queen will obey."

Gi-en-gwa-tah still looked troubled, but he had learned the uselessness of opposition—he might as well have struggled against an earthquake as against the power of that woman's will.

"The queen has much time for thought," he said, calmly; "she will decide wisely."

"She has decided! Did I not say that the prophet had come in dreams, saying: 'Let Mahaska lead her warriors forth to the war-path—without her presence they will take no scalps, but will return feeble and broken, leaving half their number to be buried like dogs by their enemies.'"

"The Senecas have been always brave."

"Is Mahaska to find opposition only in her own palace, from the father of her boy?" she exclaimed.

The lightning of her eyes checked further expostulation.

"Let Mahaska decide," he answered. "It shall be as she says."

He turned from the subject, but his words rankled in her mind. She began to believe, judging of his nature by her own instincts, that he was jealous of her power, and could not bear the idea of her winning new glory on the war-path.

"He shall be swept aside like chaff," she thought. "Gi-en-gwa-tah, beware! The clouds grow black—the earth resounds under your feet! Twice you have disputed Mahaska—attempt it once more, and your little glory shall go out like a feeble flame that my deeds will extinguish."

The chief left her alone, and she remained bending over her babe, watching with solicitude his slightest movement, yet all the while brooding over the dark thoughts forming in her mind.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE WAR-PATH.

It was a beautiful spring day; the sun lay golden and warm on Seneca lake; the forest that draped its picturesque shore wore its freshest and most vivid green; the light breeze that rippled the waters was fragrant with the odor of the wild flowers and luxuriant grasses across which it had swept in its path through the blooming wilderness. The Indian village was in an unusual state of bustle and excitement; the women and children were watching a party of warriors who performed a war-dance about the smoldering council-fire; Indians were hurrying to and fro, and every thing betokened the approach of some important departure.

Before the entrance of queen Mahaska's palace stood a horse richly caparisoned, and her body-guard, now swelled to two hundred in number, had reined up their horses upon the bank of the lake. The Senecas, together with one or two other tribes belonging to the Six Nations, were going out upon the war-path, and Mahaska had signified her intention of accompanying them. Gi-en-gwa-tah had by no means yielded the point in his own mind, but had been defiantly put to silence, though his opposition had never arisen from the unworthy feeling to which Mahaska ascribed it. Her wild ambition and restless spirit yearned for new triumphs, for she had exhausted all the ordinary successes of her life, and she determined to win for herself new glory, by bearing a prominent part in the wars in which the Indians were so frequently engaged.

The hour set for their starting had arrived; a portion of the band had gone on in advance; the rest only waited the appearance of her guard to commence their journey. She was bidding farewell to her child. In that moment of departure upon her bloody errand, the one human feeling which made her soul akin to her sex had its influence.

The winter had been spent in no luxurious idleness which would unfit her for the arduous undertaking now before her.

No matter what the extreme of cold—no matter how deep

the snow lay upon the ground, Mahaska had every day allotted to herself several hours' exercise in the open air; her aims with the rifle had grown still more deadly, and all her habits had grown more completely Amazonian than ever.

The savages became impatient for the appearance of the queen. Gi-en-gwa-tah had accompanied the advance guard and the others were eager to follow. The old Indians had come up from the village and stationed themselves near the guard; the women and children crowded in their wake, and all eyes were turned toward the doorway through which the queen must issue from her dwelling. At last there was a slight bustle within; several of the old chiefs appeared upon the threshold, and then Mahaska came out, walking alone with a prouder bearing than of old. She wore a dress of some subdued but rich color, made short to exhibit the leggings of dressed deerskin, and the elaborately wrought moccasins. Over her left shoulder was flung a finely woven blanket, fastened somewhat after the fashion of the togas of the Roman women. The sleeves of her dress fell loosely from her arms, exposing the symmetrical limb and slender hand which gave no sign of their sinewy strength any more than a first glance at the smiling face betrayed the murderous will beneath. A rich coronet of feathers circled her head, fastened in the center by a single diamond star, which flashed ominously with every haughty movement of her person. A pair of costly bracelets glittered on her wrists; the tomahawk thrust in her girdle was veined and dotted with coral, as if she had found special pleasure in the ornaments of her terrible weapon.

She stood upon the threshold and addressed a few terse, eloquent words to the people, then sprung upon her horse, and, giving her rifle to the warrior who was to ride nearest her, took her station at the head of her band. At a signal from her hand they galloped off through the windings of the forest, leaving the crowd behind watching their progress as long as the gleam of a tomahawk, or the sound of a horse's tread, came back through the morning air.

It was several hours before this band came up with the main body which had halted by Gi-en-gwa-tah's orders to await Mahaska's approach. He drew toward Mahaska and saluted her with grave courtesy—the presence of the warriors

restraining the slightest expression of affectionate solicitude.

"If Mahaska deems it good," he said, "the warriors will wait here for the return of the scouts which were sent out before the day broke."

She bowed her head carelessly, her eyes wandering over the assembled savages as if she took pleasure in their warlike appearance.

"When does the chief expect them back?" she asked.

"Before the sun is an hour higher."

"It is well; Mahaska will wait," she replied, haughtily.

She turned away from him but refused to dismount from her horse, controlling his spirited movements with a single touch of her hand. Gi-en-gwa-tah left his station near her side, for a signal then sounded from the distance and the scouts were near at hand. In a short time the chief returned to Mahaska's side.

"What news?" she asked.

"A party of our foes are encamped within a few hours' march," he answered; "they will remain there until to-morrow as they have heard that warriors from several of the Six Nations have joined our braves."

"Are they waiting for more men?" she asked.

"They have sent back for them."

"And when they arrive they mean to march on to our village?"

"So the scouts have learned."

Her face lighted up; she smiled and appeared gratified.

"They shall be spared the trouble," she said.

"What does the queen desire?" asked Gi-en-gwa-tah. "It is her first trial upon the war-path; let her tell the chief her pleasure."

"Let the warriors rest here till the dark comes," she replied; "then we will march upon the encampment. Not a man must escape. When the reinforcements arrive Mahaska and her braves will be ready to receive them."

The other chiefs who had approached near enough to hear her answer received it with favor.

"How many men are encamped there?" she asked.

The answer was, two or three hundred—a small force compared to their own.

"And how many hours' march?" she questioned.

"If the braves start an hour before sunset they will reach the spot by the time the enemy lie down to rest," replied Gi-en-gwa-tah.

"So be it," she returned.

She glanced at the little watch which she always carried; there were still several hours to wait.

"Let the queen's tent be pitched," she said; "she has need to commune with the great prophet."

Her orders were obeyed with the alacrity which followed her slightest wish. The tent had been one of the last gifts of the English, and was made very comfortable by furs and blankets. She alighted from her horse when the work of spreading it was completed, and retired to its privacy, not even glancing toward the chief.

She remained alone there during the whole afternoon, busy with her own thoughts—her face at times looking as dark and terrible as if she were indeed holding communion with some invisible presence that filled her soul with gloom.

When the sound of preparation for departure struck her ear she pushed back the curtains and stood in the entrance of her tent ready for action. Gi-en-gwa-tah, approaching the tent, informed her that the time indicated had arrived.

"Is the queen ready?" he asked.

"At all times ready," she answered, in a voice intended to be audible to those near, "to serve her people and lead them on to victory. Mahaska's plan is this: Gi-en-gwa-tah will march on with his braves and surprise the sleeping camp—he must come upon it from the front. Mahaska and her guard will advance from the other side to surprise them when they rush out in the confusion of a sudden attack."

The plan was arranged entirely to suit her wishes.

The little camp of the advancing foe lay quiet in the midnight; the sentinels seemed to have fallen into broken sleep by the waning fires. Suddenly a terrible war-cry aroused the doomed band. It was too late to do more than rush wildly to and fro and meet death in its most horrible form before they actually realized that the enemy were upon them.

Terrible yells and awful war-whoops went up in the still air; the report of rifles, the whiz of tomahawks, and the

clash of knives, made the night one scene of horror. The brave enemy, endeavoring to collect their weakened force and make a last stand, saw by the moonlight a woman ride furiously into the camp followed by a mounted guard which dealt death as they went. She rode her horse desperately down upon them; her band followed, trampling the savages right and left, crushing life out under their horses' hoofs, and, as she dealt fierce blows on each side, her clear woman's voice joined in that appalling battle-cry with a force and shrillness that made itself heard above all the terrible sounds that filled the air. When day broke the dying and dead lay piled thickly upon the forest sward. Mahaska's command had been obeyed—not one of the number had escaped to warn their approaching brethren of the fate which awaited them!

When the fight was over Mahaska sprung from her horse, still grasping the bloodstained tomahawk. A dozen scalps hung from her saddle-bow; her face was ablaze with her fierce passions.

"And now for breakfast," she exclaimed, with a laugh; "the morning's work is well done."

The braves crowded about her with congratulations upon her courage, and she listened with a smile soft and sweet as ever woman wore at homage offered to some feminine charm. While the Indians were removing the dead bodies and restoring an appearance of quiet to the camp, Mahaska sat at breakfast hidden from the terrible scene by a clump of undergrowth, and arranging her plans for meeting the arrival of the enemy's expected reinforcements. Scouts came in and reported them on the advance; before an hour elapsed they would reach the camp.

The horses were concealed in the forest—the band divided in different portions who secreted themselves near the camp. The bodies of the murdered sentinels were propped upright against trees, their blankets fluttering in the wind, mocking death with a horrible appearance of vitality.

In half an hour there was no appearance of any thing unusual having occurred in the camp. The savages were all hidden—the bodies had been so artfully arranged that those approaching the camp could not perceive the terrible cheat until they were in the midst of the ambush.

Mahaska, panting like a wild animal, crouched in her covert eager for the coming massacre—her whole senses were absorbed in the desire for carnage which possessed her like a demon. Peering out from her hiding-place she watched the enemy approach. They marched on without a suspicion of danger and soon reached the outskirts of the camp. Suddenly before and behind sprung up the ambushed Senecas, and the war-whoop that had drowned the death-cries of their brethren again smote the air.

The enemy, taken by surprise, fell back in confusion, while the Senecas rushed upon them with the resistless force of a tornado. The attacked savages however rallied and the struggle commenced in all its horror. Everywhere in the thickest of the strife Mahaska was to be seen, and her appearance urged on her men to renewed exertion. Her hair had broken loose from its confinement and streamed wildly over her shoulders; her voice rung out clear and strong as a trumpet's challenge; she looked, in her fierce beauty, like some heathen goddess inspiring the savages to unheard-of massacre and horror. Her presence filled the enemy with superstitious terror; they could not believe that it was a woman thus rushing into the blackness of the fray. Always at her appearance they fell back, paralyzed by the fear that they were contending against the power of a supernatural being. The battle raged fiercely till near noon, then the enemy fell back, their force dwindled to but a small band.

"After them!" Mahaska shrieked, springing upon her horse. "Guards, follow your queen!"

She dashed on, followed by her murderous host. The enemy broke in wild confusion before the fierce onslaught. It was the most complete victory which the tribe had had for a long time. Mahaska rode back toward her village at the head of her men, victorious and triumphant. The entire population came out to welcome their white queen with new adoration.

"Mahaska told you that the prophet would fight by her side," she exclaimed. "Now what do the chiefs say to those who doubted her power and would have kept her shut up in her palace while the battle went on?"

"The braves will follow their queen on the war-path!" was the general cry; "now and forever."

Gi-en-gwa-tah stood silent; he was proud of the success she had won, and it would have been impossible for him to explain the mingled feelings which disturbed his breast. His proud heart ached at the distance which separated him from the woman he loved with such profound worship. He began to comprehend that any fresh triumph, any accession of power, forced them still wider apart, and left her more alone in the path she had marked out to follow.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIMOOM OF PASSION.

For some time there had been no further communication between Mahaska and her husband upon the disputed point of the French alliance. Not that the woman had been idle; she had never relaxed in her exertions among the tribes, and she knew that not only the chiefs among the Senecas were with her, but so many leaders among the other Nations, that she should be able to carry the whole body at the desired moment.

She feared Gi-en-gwa-tah more than any other man; she was confident that she had greatly undermined the influence he had formerly possessed, but she knew that, despite her machinations, he still was much beloved, and she dreaded the weight his opinion and his passionate eloquence might have.

But one of two things remained: either he must yield to her will, or fall a victim to her vengeance, even if her own hand dealt the blow. Failing that, some plot must be formed, so thoroughly to disgrace him, that death, such as she had dealt her old enemy, the Fox, would be a blessing in comparison.

She was sitting alone in her dwelling, revolving these thoughts in her mind, even while the child of which he was the father lay sleeping on her knees. Her fondness for her babe was like the love of the tigress for its young; she would have fought for it, died for it; the idea of sharing its affection

with any human being, would of itself have been enough to make her hate Gi-en-gwa-tah for having a *right* to expect duty and affection from it.

The door was opened softly and her husband stood looking in. She was so absorbed in her child, that she did not see him. There he stood, looking at her and his sleeping son, full of a love and tenderness which seemed almost unmanly to his reason. He stepped softly across the floor, fearful of disturbing the sleeping boy. She looked up.

"I thought the warriors had gone out to hunt," she said; "how comes it that Gi-en-gwa-tah is here?"

"The chief wished to speak with Mahaska," he replied, "and so returned to the village."

She laid her child down upon a couch and turned coldly toward him. She had grown less careful of appearances now, and did not scruple to treat him haughtily.

"Mahaska holds secret councils with none of the chiefs," she said; "Mahaska is a queen; but what has Gi-en-gwa-tah to say?"

He was deeply wounded by her tone; she had a keen satisfaction in stabbing him with such needle-thrusts, and she knew that he was sensitive enough to feel them keenly.

"There is a cloud between Mahaska and the chief," he said, sorrowfully; "Gi-en-gwa-tah has tried to brush it away, but he can not; will Mahaska tell whence it comes?"

She smiled scornfully as she answered:

"Gi-en-gwa-tah is full of fancies as a sick girl; Mahaska can not understand them—she is a chief!"

He started at the taunt; the fire flashed into his eyes; but he did not yield to the anger which her words excited.

"Mahaska keeps aloof from the chief," he said, "and carries her child with her."

"Is it that Gi-en-gwa-tah complains of?"

"The great lodge is dark to him when she and the child are not here," he answered, with a tenderness and simple pathos inexpressibly touching in the hardy, stalwart man.

"Does Gi-en-gwa-tah wish to take the place of the squaws and tend Mahaska's babe?" she sneered.

Again the hot color mounted to his forehead and the flash to his eyes, but he answered with quiet dignity:

"Mahaska does ill to mock the chief."

"He talks riddles," she returned ; "the queen does not understand. If the chief has a message for Mahaska, let him speak ; if he has questions to demand, let him ask."

"He came to tell Mahaska news which he heard only now."

"News?" she repeated. "What news has Gi-en-gwa-tah which the queen does not know? Did the birds of the air bring it?"

He did not appear to notice the taunt; his determined composure only served to irritate her the more.

"Speak," she cried, "and have done; Mahaska has no time to waste in talk such as pleases old squaws."

"Mahaska thought the French chief a bad man," he said.

"He is," she interrupted, "a base coward."

"She wished to break off the treaty on account of it—"

"And it shall be done; Mahaska's will is the prophet's; it shall be done. Woe to those who stand in her path!"

"It is not needed now," he said; "Mahaska has no more to fear from him; the French chief has left the great city."

"Left? Where is he gone—is he dead?"

"Not dead; he has gone across the great waters—back to his own country, and will return no more."

This was an unexpected and most unwelcome obstacle, since she had fixed upon the Governor's falsity as the principal reason for breaking the treaty. The tidings made her more enraged.

"But another will come," she cried, "worse than he was—baser, more cowardly."

"Mahaska can not know that."

She turned upon him with a furious gesture.

"How is Gi-en-gwa-tah able to tell what the queen knows; can he read her thoughts or hear her voices?"

"She has not yet heard the name of the new Governor-chief."

"Tell it then!" she exclaimed; "tell it and have done. The chief caws like a crow and utters no news at last. Who have they sent as Governor now?"

"A man whom Mahaska once knew—"

"His name," she interrupted, "his name!"

"It is hard for the chief to speak; the red-men called him Willow Bough; his nation called him—"

He was hesitating over the word, when a sound from Mahaska made him look up; it was like no human cry—a strangled tiger might have uttered such a moan.

He looked at her in horror. She was pale as a corpse, her features so convulsed that they looked scarcely human—her arms were stretched out, her fingers knotting themselves together, as if crushing some unseen object.

“De Laguy,” she cried, “Gaston De Laguy?”

The chief called her name in accents of vague terror, but she did not appear to heed; still the long fingers writhed and the lips muttered:

“Gaston De Laguy.”

Strange thoughts flashed across the mind of the chief, thoughts which he could not explain, but which stung like a knife. Her terrible agitation, the tone of deadly agony and hate in which she pronounced that name, all carried his fancy to what he had known of her past life, and connected her fierce hatred toward the French with that man.

He had little time to indulge these painful reflections; Mahaska tottered into a seat, her hands fell to her side, and her strong self-control began to exert itself.

“You bring me this news,” she exclaimed, at length, in a voice worn and hollow from her passion; “you say there is nothing to fear now? Blind fool, there is every thing to fear!”

“Is the young brave false, too?” he asked.

“False!” she gasped. “A fiend from among the pale-faces is not falser! He hates the very name of an Indian—the Senecas worst of all! Away with all treaties—broken from this hour! Mahaska swears it! Does the chief hear?” she cried, turning furiously toward him.

“He hears,” he replied, in a tone expressive of great agitation.

“No more talk of keeping faith,” she shrieked; “whoever comes between Mahaska and her revenge, shall die like a dog.”

“What revenge does she seek?” he asked.

In her passion she had used the word incautiously, but she was too nearly mad to remember prudence.

“Yes, revenge!” she repeated. “Mahaska hates the whole

race, but that man and his pale wife worst of all! That girl's mother broke the heart of Mahaska's mother; she will have revenge! That man insulted and defied Mahaska—she will have his heart's blood! Let the chief beware; he is either with or against the queen in this thing; let him think well; so surely as he tries to thwart her, he shall meet the doom of the Fox!"

She poured out her threats fearlessly; all other arguments had failed; fear of her anger might check him; at all events, in her insane passion she must speak.

"The prophet warned Mahaska; the serpent's nest shall be crushed! Gaston De Laguy!" she called again, unconsciously employing the language of her youth. "Beware! Better have trusted to the mercy of a panther than have crossed the sea again. Both you and Adèle, your noble wife, shall be in my power—both—at my feet, suing for mercy only to be trampled under foot! Revenge is now possible—give me my revenge!"

The chief understood enough of the rapid words to gather their import, and his brow grew darker and sadder.

Suddenly she darted toward him, and caught his arm in her grasp.

"Let the chief speak," she cried, in the Indian tongue; "does he join Mahaska or not? Must she expect aid or enmity from him?"

"Never enmity," he exclaimed, "Mahaska knows that."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah hesitates! This is no time for him to choose his words! If he opposes Mahaska further, he is her enemy; the chief knows how Mahaska can hate!"

He did not appear to heed the menacing tone in which the last words were spoken; she turned from him and paced up and down the room. Once she paused and looked down upon her sleeping child, but her face, instead of softening at its innocent slumber, gathered new ferocity.

"Let Mahaska weigh well her actions," said the chief, after a pause, with a calmness which contrasted strangely with her agitation. "This is no light matter that she contemplates; let her not decide from her own passions—"

She turned upon him as if she could have smitten him to the ground.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah speaks folly," she cried; "is he a coward, too? Does he fear the long rifles of the Frenchmen?"

He disdained even to answer her by the braggadocio so common among the Indians; and, though his whole frame shook with agitation at the insulting words, his voice was unmoved, as he said:

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah's past speak for itself! The chief fears to break his word; never did he do it, even when as a boy he first began to hunt the wild deer; he could not see his people go back from their pledges and prove themselves false as the lying Tuscaroras, whatever their gain might be."

"The chief had better go among the pale-faces that he may learn the mummeries of their faith, and turn his brethren into black-coated owls, such as live in the stone lodges in Quebec," retorted Mahaska, with bitter irony.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah is content with the faith of his fathers," he said, still struggling to maintain his composure. "Mahaska is not like herself to-day; her words are sharp as arrows. Has some evil spirit taken possession of her?"

"A spirit that shall rend the chief in pieces if he oppose her," she cried, in a terrible voice; "let him beware!"

"Gi-en-gwa-tah will do his duty whatever happens; he has never yet turned aside from it."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah may wrap himself in a blanket and weave baskets in the door of his lodge; he is not fit to be a chief. Let him prove himself a coward and the people will tear the eagle plumes from his hair!" she exclaimed, stamping upon the floor in her rage.

He took a step forward and looked in her face with an expression of concentrated indignation she had never seen there before.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah is the chief chosen for Mahaska," he said, in a deep voice; "she may be a queen, but let her not speak base insults to her husband!"

She laughed aloud, driven beyond the possibility of self-control by the storm his words aroused, the first approaching menace which she had ever heard from his lips.

"Mahaska chose—Mahaska can put aside; she is a queen still! Does the chief threaten her? Let him follow her to

the village; the council shall decide between them; let him come!"

She took a step toward the door but he did not stir—not for any price would he have had her exhibit herself to the people while in that insane fury, which his natural dignity of character felt was so degrading to her state.

"The council can not come between the chief and the queen," he said; "this matter must be settled in their own lodge, not before the eyes of all the people."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah knows well what their judgment would be," she answered, mistaking his hesitation for a dread of the disapproval of the tribe; "he dare not go before the chiefs and say that he opposes the will of Mahaska—the command of the prophet."

"Mahaska speaks from her anger; Gi-en-gwa-tah does not hear the voice of the prophet in her words."

It was the first time he had ever really rebuked her—the first time he had ever ventured to doubt her; but love gave to the savage that intuitive knowledge of her feelings which love alone can give; he saw she was actuated by a desire of vengeance against the new Governor; he felt, with a horrible pang, that in her old life that man had been every thing to her—that it was affection turned to hate which now urged her on.

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah repeat those words," she almost whispered, in a tone that sounded like the hiss of a serpent; "let him say again that he does not believe her visions; it shall be the last time he ever utters such doubts."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah does not doubt her; he knows that she is a great prophetess; but, now, she can not be speaking what her spirits have told her, for until Gi-en-gwa-tah brought the tidings, she thought the young French brave across the deep waters."

That he should have in a measure penetrated her feelings and possess acuteness to argue thus, inflamed her passion still more; her first impulse was to kill him where he stood; only a keen sense of the danger to herself in this act prevented her.

Not daring to trust herself to speak just then, she resumed her rapid march up and down the room, while a thousand

projects darted like lightning-flashes through her quick brain. She must employ craft still, but only once more; let her keep him from appealing to the chiefs for a few hours, and she could render him powerless.

When she had gained sufficient command over herself to speak calmly, she paused in her walk before him—cold and white from the effects of her fury, but forcing her voice into a tone that sounded more natural and calm.

"The queen has reflected," she said; "Gi-en-gwa-tah is right; words such as have passed between them are not for the people to hear."

He bowed his head to conceal the expression of anguish which passed over it; that stormy dialogue and the revelations it forced upon his mind, made the bitterest hour of his whole life.

"Mahaska has decided well," he answered; "but even the lodge that holds the chief and his wife should never hear such words."

She clenched her hands together in her loose sleeves, feeling the necessity of some physical struggle to restrain the insulting epithets which sprung to her lips.

"What is passed is passed," she said; "let there be no more talk of these things; Mahaska goes to consult her spirits."

He bowed assent to her wishes, but made no movement to leave the room. She must have him out of the way if she would succeed in her project.

She turned toward him with a change of manner and face so sudden and entire that it was really marvelous, and he stood bewildered before the coming forth of her beauty from its black cloud of anger—bewildered and fascinated, but not with the faith and weakness of the past; through it all pierced the fierce pain which had smitten his heart when she uttered her vows of vengeance against the French Governor.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah promised Mahaska fresh salmon from the lake," she said, and a sweet, girlish laugh, rung from the lips that had before trembled with bitter denunciations; "let him bring them to-night, that she may know her peace is made with the chief."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah will go," he replied, gravely, anxious to be

alone that he might reason away the cruel thoughts which struggled in his heart.

"And when will the chief return?" she demanded, carelessly playing with the fringe of her girdle, as if she had absolutely forgotten her passion, so changed and smiling that it seemed hardly possible she could be the woman who had raged there like a chained tigress only a few moments before.

"He must go miles up the lake," replied Gi-en-gwa-tah; "it will be after nightfall when he returns."

"Mahaska will wait for the evening meal till he returns," she said; "wait for the chief's peace-offering," and she smiled again, with such frank sweetness that eyes more skilled than those of the Indian would have failed to detect the danger in its depths.

She parted from him with the same pleasant manner. As he left the room he looked back—she had taken up her sleeping child and was pressing it to her bosom, as if all her thoughts had centered again in that engrossing maternal love.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW LINK IN THE CHAIN.

MAHASKA sat motionless until she heard her husband's footsteps die away from the outer room; then she laid the child back among the cushions and hurried to the window. She then pushed the draperies aside and looked out. From her stand she could see far up the lake, which was lying placid and bright in the afternoon sun. The whole scene was one of such pleasant summer tranquillity, so out of tune with her wild thoughts, that she gazed upon it as a lost spirit might look into heaven. She saw Gi-en-gwa-tah come out upon the bank accompanied by a couple of his men—stood there and watched the canoe unmoored, and all their preparations made complete. They were off at last, paddling swiftly up the lake; but still she watched them until the barque became a mere speck in the distance. Then she put a

silver whistle to her lips and blew a shrill call—her usual summons to the squaws who attended upon her. When an Indian woman came in she motioned her to take away the child, resumed her eager walk for a few moments' reflection, but soon hurried from the house. She walked down into the village, pausing to speak kindly to a group of women sunning themselves on the grass, followed, as she always was, by looks of love and awe when she appeared among her people, and made her way toward the lodge inhabited by the old chief, Upepah.

He was sitting there in characteristic indolence, surrounded by several chiefs nearest his own age and dignity. When they saw Mahaska enter so unexpectedly they arose, with the grave courtesy she had taught them as her due, waiting in silence for her to declare the errand which had led to that unusual visit. Knowing that they were all in favor of her schemes against the French, there was no need for argument and persuasion.

"The queen has come to hold council with her father," she said to the old chief, "and with the wise chiefs gathered about him."

"It is well," Upepah answered; "let the queen speak."

She motioned them to be seated, and sat down among them, calm and deliberate in every action as was in accordance with their habits.

"The queen has tidings from the English chief," she said; "his nation are out on the war-path against the French."

They never asked how her information was acquired; in their strong faith in her supernatural powers they believed it easy for her to attain any knowledge.

"The time has come," she continued, "to prove to the English that the chiefs were not deceiving them in their protestations of friendship—are they ready?"

They looked at each other with a little doubt. The gifts and promises of the British had made them eager for the new alliance; but the burning eloquence of Gi-en-gwa-tah had made them somewhat ashamed of the treachery they meditated, and they hesitated to take the first decisive step which should complete their double-dealing. Mahaska saw what was in their minds, and hastened to remove the fear that they were going to be called upon to commence open hostility

against their former allies. She had planned leading them to open war by degrees, entangling them so completely that a positive outbreak would be unavoidable.

"The English chief does not ask them to make ready for the war-path," she said. "This is what he wishes, and the prophet has bidden Mahaska urge its fulfillment upon the chiefs."

They listened eagerly, glad to depend upon the will of the spirits, as pronounced by the queen's lips, and so cast from their minds any personal blame in the matter.

"Let the chiefs send out a band of warriors to watch the movements of the French—nothing more is desired. Mahaska herself will go with them. If, while they are gone, the French are guilty of any bad faith toward the Senecas, the chiefs will not have been the first to break the treaty."

They looked from one to another, well content to have the matter thus arranged, and Upepah said:

"The queen speaks wisely—let it be as she wishes."

"No time must be lost," she urged; "before the sun is in the heavens to-morrow, Mahaska and her warriors must be on their way."

"Let the queen decide," they answered.

"Her own band will be enough," she continued, certain that not a man among them would oppose her will in any way, but rather would second her efforts to bring on an outbreak between the French and the tribe.

She conversed with them for some time; all the plans were completed, and her guard warned to be in readiness at the appointed hour.

"The chiefs have acted wisely," she said, as she arose to go; "the prophet is pleased with them."

A satisfied murmur ran through the group. On the instant the thought flashed through her mind to choose this moment to plant in their minds a feeling of suspicion against Gi-en-gwa-tah stronger than she had ever yet ventured to arouse.

"The queen's dreams are troubled," she said, in a troubled tone, turning again toward them.

They looked at her in surprise, and then waited.

"The time has not come for her to speak openly; but her spirits have whispered strange words in her ear."

"Will she repeat them to the chiefs?"

"She can tell them, because they are old men and very wise; but let them be silent for the present."

"They will not reveal Mahaska's words until she wills it."

She went close up to the old men, and whispered;

"The prophet fears that the chiefs forced a choice upon Mahaska too quickly. The chief they made for her husband is false and ambitious, hating her for her visions and the love the people bear her. The prophet has warned Mahaska against his treachery; she will watch night and day; the spirits will make it known to her; then she will bring the matter before the whole people. Let the chiefs be silent until she returns."

While they were still full of wonder and anger at her words, she passed quickly from among them, and took her way back to her palace by the lake. She had gained her ends; from that expedition she would not return until by some covert act she had put it out of the power of the tribe to continue at amity with the French; but the fiercest exultation in her breast was at the thought of the suspicion she had aroused against Gi-en-gwa-tah—a suspicion which should be carefully fanned until it burst into a flame that would consume him. It was now sunset; Gi-en-gwa-tah would not return until nightfall, and there was little fear of his even learning any thing about the expedition until morning. Then it would be too late for him in any way to thwart her.

That had been a long, dreary afternoon to the unhappy chief. When they reached their place of destination he left his companions to their sport and wandered away into the forest, anxious to be alone with the host of strange thoughts which had suddenly forced his mind into such restless activity. He could not have explained the feelings which tortured his heart; but, even in his untutored state, his faculties were singularly sensitive and imaginative. He was suffering the horrible grief and jealousy a civilized man might, when the first doubt in regard to the woman he loved arose in his mind—a doubt that she had never returned his affection—that, back in the life of which he knew so little, lay the only dream of love her heart had ever known.

There came, too, for the first time, a fear that she employed her supernatural gifts to further her own ends, her ambition and her hatred. He did not doubt the gifts ascribed to her, but he began to understand how all her powers tended toward absolute dominion, and he was stunned to see this woman, whom he had looked upon as a creature of a higher sphere, prove herself capable of using her prophetic wisdom as a means of personal aggrandizement.

But, even with the idea that she had loved the French Governor, there came no thought of accepting the means of revenge in his power against the man. By joining her plans the opportunity would have offered itself; but a reason like that could not tempt him to urge his people to break their pledge and plunge into a causeless war with those he knew to be friends.

So, in the midst of these torturing reflections, the long afternoon passed away, and in the dusk of evening he returned to his companions.

Their canoe sped swiftly down the lake, and once more Gi-en-gwa-tah entered his dwelling, but now dark shadows walked beside him and stood between him and the woman he had so blindly worshiped.

Mahaska received him with her brightest smiles, making not an allusion to what had happened, but conversing only of his day's sport. She sat opposite him at the supper, spread, according to her habits, after the fashion of the whites, so gay and fascinating that he tried to think the dreadful thoughts of the day had been roused only by his own fancy.

He did not go down into the village, so no warning of the proposed expedition reached him, and Mahaska sat smiling at the success of her maneuvers as she furtively watched him.

The moon came up broad and full, and streamed into the apartment where they sat. Mahaska had an appointment at that hour, and, without deigning any explanation, she arose to go out.

"Mahaska is going away?" he asked.

"The prophet bade her be on the lake to-night in the moonlight; let Gi-en-gwa-tah go to his rest; perhaps Mahaska's spirits will set the matter which troubles him at rest."

He allowed her to depart in silence, no idea of opposition entering his mind. Those midnight communings on the lake

always had been her habit since she came among the Indians, so that there was nothing in her going out to excite his distrust.

Left to himself, all Gi-en-gwa-tah's painful reflections returned, and he went out into the night to forget them in a hurried walk. With no thought of attempting to watch Mahaska he walked along the shore above his dwelling, lost in the sad thoughts which crowded upon his mind. He plunged into the depths of the forest and rushed away through its shadows, feeling a sense of relief in rapid action. Miles beyond the Indian village he came out upon the shore again, and stood on a little eminence looking across the lake. The moonlight lay soft and clear upon the waters; the shadows of the great trees were reflected in its depths; the summer wind sighed up softly from the wilderness and rippled the bosom of the lake until the broad sheet of silvery water sparkled and shone as if countless gems had been flung up from its depths. The tranquillity of the scene must have soothed the most agitated mind.

Unconsciously the chief's mood changed, and he stood looking across the waves with a feeling of rest that he had not known during the whole long day. Suddenly his quick eye caught an object far out in the lake. He gazed intently; it drifted nearer until Gi-en-gwa-tah saw distinctly a canoe with Mahaska seated in it, the moonlight playing about her like a halo. He was turning away, believing that light supernatural, and a thrill of awe ran through his frame that he should unwittingly have been a spectator of her secret watch. Just then his eye was attracted by an object which changed the whole current of his thoughts. A canoe moved close by that in which Mahaska sat, and a man was clearly visible in it. Was it only a shadowy barque that he saw? Did her spirits take visible shapes and thus appear to her.

He stood spell-bound, divided between the superstition which made a part of his religious belief, and the jealous pang which wrung his breast. While he watched, trying to believe that it was no human shape or earthly barque, he saw the canoes parted company. Mahaska rowed swiftly away down the lake while the other boat sped off in a contrary direction.

Gi-en-gwa-tah watched the strange canoe disappear, still divided in his feelings—one moment tempted to rush up the shore and attempt to keep the barque in sight, the next checking the impulse as a wicked thought which, if carried out, might bring destruction not only upon himself but his whole people. Mahaska's canoe had disappeared and the boat he watched was turning a distant point. At that moment a clear whistle sounded from it. He listened; no supernatural tones were they. Fragments of a melody he had heard among the pale-faces during his visits to Quebec, were given out by the whistler with careless grace.

Before the chief could recover from his stupefaction the canoe had disappeared, and Gi-en-gwa-tah stood alone in the still midnight, with his most terrible fears confirmed, his heart wrung and tortured with pangs undreamed before, and, worse than all, his religious faith—the faith in the spiritual powers of the queen which had made her so holy an object in his eyes—shaken to its very foundation.

After these first moments of agony, he rushed away down the shore, suddenly plunged anew into the forest and buried himself in its depths, not trusting himself to return to his dwelling until a few hours' reflection had given him back something of his old strength and composure.

The gray dawn was breaking over the lake when Gi-en-gwa-tah emerged from the forest and approached his own dwelling. He saw Mahaska's body-guard, increased till its number consisted of at least two hundred and fifty warriors, drawn up before the entrance to the palace. Filled with astonishment at the sight, with his mind so racked by the suspicions of the past that he was doubtful what their appearance there at that hour might portend, he rushed through the groups of savages collected about and entered the house. In one of the inner rooms he met Mahaska, face to face. She was attired after her usual fashion when going upon a long journey, and every thing about her betokened the haste of approaching departure.

"What are Mahaska's warriors stationed by her palace for?" he asked, abruptly, with a sudden conviction that some treachery was intended by this sudden and secret move. "Whither is Mahaska going?"

She looked at him with undisguised triumph.

"The chiefs have desired Mahaska to go into the forest," she said, "and watch the movements of the pale-faces; they are at war."

"This hides some treachery toward our friends," he exclaimed; "Mahaska means evil."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah mutters still like an old squaw," she said, scornfully; "but his words are weak as the wind; Mahaska is going forth."

"Let her wait!" he exclaimed, passionately; "Gi-en-gwa-tah will see the chiefs; there have been false whispers in their ears."

"The squaws of burthen may obey Gi-en-gwa-tah; the warriors who serve under him may heed," she cried, "but Mahaska is queen of the Senecas and a prophet in the whole Six Nations; let the young brave choose other words when he speaks to her."

Astounded at her air of defiance, and yet not to be put aside, Gi-en-gwa-tah plead earnestly with her for a few moments, but his words were idle. It was too late now to seek the chiefs; there was nothing for it but submission—the wily woman had outwitted him. She turned away without even a show of parting, and passed out of the house where her horse awaited. Gi-en-gwa-tah gave some order to one of the savages and followed. Mahaska was in her saddle, exchanging last words with a few of the elder chiefs who had come up to witness her departure, when Gi-en-gwa-tah rode up to her side mounted on his war-horse.

She stared at him in haughty anger and surprise.

"Whither goes Gi-en-gwa-tah?" she demanded.

"With Mahaska and her warriors," he replied, with quiet firmness which she well understood.

For an instant it seemed as if she would give way to the storm of passion which this determination aroused; but it was checked by a sudden thought of the danger of such a course to her schemes at that moment of their initiation.

Let him go—she would not oppose it. During this journey the long-sought opportunity to ruin him should be found; in his blind obstinacy he had rushed toward the fate she held in store for him. Her brow cleared; she gathered up her reins with a smile.

"Mahaska is glad that the chief accompanies her; he shall be one of her warriors now."

He did not return the smile, for he understood perfectly the meaning she intended to convey—that the expedition was entirely under her control, and that, in accompanying it, he went without any authority. Still, he did not falter in his resolve; he *must* learn the truth of his doubts concerning her. Besides that, his presence might be the means of preventing any trouble between her party and the French; but, in that, he counted upon an influence which he no longer possessed. Mahaska's guard were bound to her by blind devotion, and her slightest wish would be their law. With them the chief was powerless.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SECRET JOURNEY AND THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

THE long-threatened war between the French and English betokened its nearer approach by numerous aggressions upon both sides, and skirmishes became frequent.

At this time Gaston de Laguy had been appointed Governor of Canada. He was a young man to hold an office of such importance, but there had been a variety of peculiar circumstances which led to his appointment, and among those which most induced him to accept the position had been the health of his wife, Adèle. She had been the adopted daughter of Count de Frontenac, the former Governor, and was the playmate of Mahaska in her childhood, as well as the hated rival of her girlish years, for she had won the love of de Laguy whom Mahaska had worshiped with a passion bordering on frenzy in its intensity and reckless disregard of conventional proprieties.

Madame de Laguy's health had declined after the birth of her first-born, and the physicians decided that a return to Canada and the enjoyment of the free air of the wilderness, in which so much of her early life had been spent, would conduce more than all their skill to restore her to health. So

they had returned to Canada, and, though Adèle retained few pleasant memories of the country, she was content to remain there for a time, since she could have the enjoyment of her husband's society and that of her child, with the prospect of recovering her wasted strength.

The love between de Laguy and his beautiful wife was something truly impressive to witness. They seemed to have grown so closely into each other's souls that not even death could disturb the ties which bound them.

The birth of their boy drew them still more closely together, and, content with the world of happiness which they could center in their home, they came unrepiningly out to the New World. During the summer, business of importance took the Governor to Montreal, whither his wife and child accompanied him. While there, they received intelligence of the arrival of an old friend and relative of de Laguy at Quebec, and, as the Governor could not leave for some time, Adèle determined to return at once in order to welcome him at the gubernatorial castle.

The parting between the young husband and his wife was very painful, but it would be only of brief duration, and the Governor saw his treasures depart under the charge of a numerous escort without fear for her safety or anxiety beyond the pain of separation. The Governor's wife made the journey in boats, and, as the weather was delightful, the trip was exceedingly pleasant.

Adèle did her best to shake off the oppression which parting from her husband had caused, with the unselfishness which made one of the most beautiful traits of her character, and endeavored to make every return for the efforts which the officers, who commanded her escort, employed to render her journey pleasant. So she drifted on toward her own sumptuous home, counting the days in her loving heart as blanks in her life till they brought back her husband.

While this journey was taking place, Mahaska and her band of warriors were threading the forest till they reached the vicinity of the St. Lawrence. It had been a dreary journey to Gi-en-gwa-tah; Mahaska had paid very little attention to his presence, but she never missed an opportunity to make his slight impatience apparent to the band, and to irritate him by

a thousand feminine efforts of malice. Still, he would not speak harshly to her; in spite of all, he loved her with the fervor of a noble heart that has set all its hopes on one object. He suffered cruelly and he changed greatly during those long days, but he bore up bravely under the heart-martyrdom which she inflicted on him. But he watched her; doubt and jealousy grew every day stronger in his mind. If once fully convinced that she was deceiving his people, all his love would not prevent his exposing her plots; his keen sense of honor and right would not have allowed him to remain silent.

So they journeyed on, but nothing arose to throw light upon the trouble in his mind or to make the reason of this hasty journey more apparent. He could neither eat nor sleep; all his faculties seemed absorbed in that eager suspense as if some great crisis were at hand and he was waiting for its approach.

Besides her other reasons for this expedition, Mahaska had one which was unknown to any human being—a project which she might not be able to carry out at that time, but which was swayed by the passion in her nature next in magnitude to her thirst for power and revenge—her love of wealth.

It was a plan which would be very difficult to carry out, and in which she could not trust even the most faithful of her band, resulting from a secret confided to her by her grandmother, Ahmo, just before her death, a few months previously. It was Ahmo to whose baleful influence the child of Count Frontenac owed much of the unnatural ferocity of her nature. It was Ahmo who had instilled into Mahaska's mind the idea that Frontenac had poisoned her mother—she it was who had inspired the girl with the idea of a queenly supremacy over the tribes of the Six Nations, by whom her mother's father, the great chief and prophet Nemono, had been held in the greatest reverence. After Mahaska's rejection by the gay young cavalier—de Laguy—to whom she made a remarkable proposition of marriage, but who rejected her strange suit and soon wed Adèle, Mahaska's foster-sister and companion—the half-breed's passions were in a fit mood to bend to the will of Ahmo's cunning and treacherous nature, and the girl passed off among the Indians to become their queen and prophet. Old Ahmo's implacable soul only stayed long enough in its

worn out body to see her grandchild the wife of one of the Seneca braves and the acknowledged princess of the tribe.

It was just after Mahaska's arrival among the Senecas, that she was one day sitting in her lodge, reflecting upon the savage life which now she had chosen, when the draperies were flung back and Ahmo entered the apartment. Her form was bent; her steps tottering and feeble, and it was evident that she was rapidly passing away beyond the restlessness of this life.

She had been for several days confined to her bed; Mahaska, hence, looked in astonishment at her entrance.

"Ahmo could not rest; she longed to see her grandchild once again."

"Mahaska would have come to you," she said, kindly; "Ahmo is feeble; she should not be out in the chill air."

The old woman sunk down on a pile of furs near Mahaska and began muttering to herself.

"Ahmo is tired, very tired," said Mahaska, compassionately.

"Ahmo is dying," replied the old woman, calmly.

Mahaska started; the idea of death was terrible to her then; she could have met it once with fortitude, but now blankness and desolation were abhorrent to her proud nature.

"All night she heard the voices of Nemono and her daughter Chileli," continued the old woman; "they are waiting for Ahmo; they have made ready her lodge in the happy hunting-grounds."

"Ahmo will stay yet with Mahaska, and watch her greatness increase till it is beyond that of all the chiefs," said the white girl.

The old woman shook her head.

"Three generations have blossomed before Ahmo's eyes; she is very old and wants rest."

"Can she not rest in Mahaska's lodge?"

"But she wants the rest without dreams that they sleep down yonder by the water; Ahmo is old, and Chileli calls. She must go."

She was silent again for some moments, then added:

"Ahmo has a secret for her grandchild."

"Has Ahmo kept secrets from Mahaska?" she asked,

reproachfully, her heart softening strangely at the woman's changed face and feeble manner.

"Ahmo will tell it now," she returned. "There was no need till she was ready to go forth in search of Nemono."

"Ahmo could have trusted her child."

"She knows it. But Ahmo was old; she loved power; she had grown miserly—Mahaska will not be angry."

"Mahaska is never angry with Ahmo; let her hear this secret."

"Mahaska remembers the island lodge where she used to come and stay when a child?"

The girl's features contracted as they always did at the mention of any thing connected with that portion of her life; but she bowed her head in token of assent and motioned the old woman to proceed, not trusting her voice lest it should startle the sick woman by the passion it betrayed.

"Below the lodge," pursued Ahmo, "there stand two willow trees. Mahaska has not forgotten them."

It was not likely; as a child she had played under their shadow; as a girl she had sat there weaving her wild visions; often in her sleep had she heard the rustle of the long branches as they swayed to and fro, to awaken, suddenly, almost believing for an instant that the events of the past had been a dream, and that she was still a girl in the old lodge on Orleans Island.

"Mahaska will find a little knot at the foot of the lower tree; let her dig it away and push back the bark—she will see a box that was Chileli's, Mahaska's mother—it is full of gold."

Mahaska was not greatly surprised; she knew that in her mother's lifetime Frontenac had paid a large sum to old Ahmo, but she always averred that it had been squandered among the tribe.

"How much gold has Ahmo there?" she asked.

The woman named the sum—it was much larger than Mahaska expected, and the avaricious greed in her soul woke at once.

"But why did Ahmo leave it there?" she demanded.

The woman returned some vague answer.

"Mahaska can get it," she said.

"But how? It will not be easy for Mahaska now to go so near Quebec. It would have been better to have brought the money when Ahmo came on to join the tribe."

The old woman shook her head. The possession of that secret hoard had been one of the chief delights of her old age; nothing but the approach of death could have induced her to reveal her mystery even to her grandchild. She had bitterly lamented leaving it behind when she was forced to leave her home on the island, but she feared that it might be discovered by some watchful eye, and so concluded to leave it in its hiding-place.

"It may have been stolen," Mahaska said.

"No, no," returned Ahmo, with more energy than she had before betrayed; "Ahmo did her work well—even with the knowledge she has given her, Mahaska will find it hard to discover her gold."

Mahaska was reflecting upon some means of placing the gold in her own possession. She had no one whom she chose to trust on an errand like that, while to go herself was an undertaking not at all agreeable to contemplate. The thought of increasing her wealth was delightful enough in itself, though there was a much broader passion than mere avarice reigning in her mind—the greater her wealth the more extended her influence. Gold and power—her soul centered its hopes on the two.

She looked at Ahmo and her heart softened again—she could not conceal from herself that the old woman was dying—a little time and she would be alone of all her race.

"Mahaska is not angry with Ahmo?" the woman demanded, rousing herself quickly.

"Angry? no! Mahaska loves Ahmo; her heart is knit fast to that of her grandmother."

The old squaw's face lighted up with a gleam of pleasure. She crept nearer to her grandchild and sheltered her head in the folds of her dress.

"Ahmo only kept her treasure secret to please her old age; it will be all Mahaska's now."

"Ahmo did well; Mahaska cares nothing for the gold; she would rather see her grandmother strong and vigorous than to possess all the gold the world could offer."

The old woman smiled; she was touched and gratified by these words of affection.

"Mahaska shall be happy," she said, "because she is kind to the aged woman; she loves her grandame."

"When the spring comes, Ahmo will grow strong again," urged the granddaughter.

The woman lifted her head warningly.

"Ahmo will never see the snow fall again; let not Mahaska deceive herself."

She supported herself against the furs and motioned Mahaska to sit by her side. She sat for a long time silently regarding her, then she said:

"Mahaska will be a great queen; Ahmo only wishes to live long enough to witness her marriage with the chosen brave of her tribe."

"Ahmo will surely live," Mahaska replied, more touched than she had thought to be by the scene.

"She believes so," said the woman; "Ahmo will watch over her from the spirit-land; let Mahaska be content."

At last she rose as well as her feeble strength would permit and tottered away—she pressed a last kiss upon her grandchild's forehead and made a sign of farewell as she turned to move away.

"Mahaska will go with you," she said.

"No, no; Ahmo can still walk; she *must* keep her strength; she must live to see her grandchild go home to Gi-en-gwa-tah's lodge."

There never had been any further conversation between them on the subject, for the old woman died suddenly during the midst of the festivities which had followed the wedding of Mahaska. For a long time after that event Mahaska had been too much occupied with her own fortunes to devise any means for obtaining the coveted gold; but she had by no means forgotten the affair, and, during this expedition, she trusted to find an opportunity of approaching sufficiently near Quebec to go to the island of which her grandmother had spoken, in the hope of obtaining possession of the gold she had buried there, although she knew well that such an expedition would be very perilous and it might be impossible at the time.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTIVE.

MANY a wild thought raged in Mahaska's mind, too wild for reason or control, but all bearing to one end. She rode on day after day, haunted by the idea that some unlooked-for event would place it in her power to wreak the vengeance she yearned for against the Governor of Quebec, and so bring at once her wishes to a fulfillment.

Mahaska had her scouts out in every direction. They had received strict orders to report to her without informing Gi-en-gwa-tah of any discoveries they might make. Gi-en-gwa-tah had gone one day with several companions on a hunting excursion. Mahaska wishing to rid herself of his presence, had expressed a desire for him to bring her venison and game of his own shooting, and her slightest request was still his law.

Mahaska was sitting in her tent, several miles back from the river. She had determined that if no opportunity to annoy the French offered, she would at least visit the island in person before the neighborhood of the Indians should become known, and then return to Seneca lake, having possession of the buried treasures which Ahmo's ingenuity and avarice had secured to her grandchild.

One morning a scout approached her tent.

"What news?" she asked, abruptly.

"Many boats on the river," he answered, "going up to the great settlement."

"Who are they? Did Omene hear?"

"It is reported that the Governor-chief is sending his squaw back to the great settlement," he answered.

Mahaska sprung to her feet with the bound of a lioness. She had learned the fact of De Laguy having become Governor of Quebec: the thought that Adèle might again be thrown in her power fairly dizzied her with its promise of torture to her hated foe and his despised wife. Having questioned the man minutely, she dismissed him and sat down to

arrange in her mind the project which had so suddenly been called into life.

Toward sunset she selected a number of her body-guard and set out in the direction of the river. One of the savages was sent in advance, to await the coming of the boats and learn the exact order in which they were journeying. It so chanced that the boat which carried the Governor's wife had fallen behind. Adèle, having placed the nurse and child in another canoe, sat conversing with a female acquaintance who was accompanying her on her return to Quebec. It was growing almost twilight; they had reached a point where the river took a variety of short curves, and the bank was so thickly wooded that the boats often lost sight of each other. Still, the officer who had command of the expedition had given no orders for the canoes to be kept more closely together, as there was scarcely a supposition of danger in the whole journey.

The two ladies were conversing so eagerly that they did not observe that the other boats had passed out of sight. But the rower seeing this, was bending forward to make new exertions, and they were just passing a dark point of the forest, when he was struck violently upon the head, lost his balance, and fell backward into the water.

The two women sprung up with a cry of dismay; at the same instant, several Indians burst out of the thicket and plunged into the water. The boat was seized and dragged to the shore, and Madame De Lenneville, as she fell insensible in the canoe, heard one last shriek from the hapless Adèle, and saw her borne off in the arms of savages.

That appalling cry brought back the other boats; they saw the canoe drifting down the current with the lady's companion lying senseless, but neither the oarsman nor the Governor's wife were to be seen.

It was a long time before Madame De Lenneville could be restored to consciousness, and even then, her senses were so confused by the shock, that she could give no clear account of the occurrence.

Further down the river they found the body of the oarsman, who had been so stunned by the blow that he could make no effort, and was swept passively down the stream.

To Madame De Lenneville's excited imagination, the number of the savages appeared immense, and the officers decided that nothing could be done but to push on to Quebec for assistance, as any attempt to follow the Indians with their little party would only result in a general massacre.

They hurried on through the gathering twilight, every breast tortured with anxiety. The child awoke and moaned piteously for his mother. The sound was a new agony to her friends, for but few of that little party ever expected to see the Governor's wife alive.

The queen's body-guard bore the hapless lady swiftly along through the forest, answering neither her cries or supplications. After the first moments of agonizing fear, her thoughts were of her child. Anxiety kept her senses all acute; she had not even the blessing of insensibility. Once or twice she caught glimpses of men on horseback galloping before them through the windings of the forest; but she could distinguish nothing more. No one spoke to her. She was a prisoner. Mahaska was one of the riders—she urged her horse forward into the camp. Gi-en-gwa-tah met her, but before he could speak, she exclaimed:

"Prepare every thing for our departure; we must be miles away before the dawn breaks."

"Our queen rides fast," he returned, with a feeling that she had been upon some lawless errand. "Whence comes she in such haste?"

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah keep silent," she exclaimed; "it is not for him to question the descendant of the prophet."

She turned to the Indians, and issued her commands for an instant departure.

"Where are the rest who went out with the queen?" demanded the chief.

"They are coming through the forest," cried Mahaska.

She pointed down the path. As the chief looked, the party carrying Adèle appeared in sight.

"A prisoner!" he exclaimed. "What has the queen done?"

"The wife of the French Governor is Mahaska's prisoner," returned she, with a fearful laugh. "This time, these hands shall strangle the viper; there is no escape now."

The chief uttered an exclamation of horror.

"The Nations have not declared war," he said, hurriedly; "Mahaska will ruin herself by this act."

"Fool!" she exclaimed. "Will you try to teach Mahaska? Out of my path, or I will trample you under my horse's feet!"

But he stood his ground firmly, and after one prolonged glance of fiendish hate, Mahaska turned toward her prisoner.

Adèle caught sight of her old friend and arch-enemy, as she was seated upon the powerful black horse. A light from the fires fell full upon Mahaska's face, and in spite of the changes evil passions and her wild life had made, Adèle recognized her foster-sister at once. From that instant she resigned all hope; she uttered no cry, but remained gazing at the face turned upon her as if fascinated by the glare of those basilisk eyes.

The savages placed her upon the ground. She leaned against a tree for support, but did not turn her eyes from the face of her captor.

A cold, deadly smile wreathed the white queen's lip. She bowed low, with an affectation of extreme courtesy, and said in her blindest voice:

"Queen Mahaska bows herself before the guest who honors her camp; the wife of the French Governor is welcome."

Adèle shuddered at that voice, for she knew well the hatred and danger expressed in its accents.

"Katharine!" she exclaimed, involuntarily, calling her by the familiar name which she had borne when a child in her father's castle. "Oh, Katharine, what harm have I done you?"

Mahaska started; wrath surged into her face, but she controlled the rising tempest, looked carelessly about, as if to see whom the lady had thus addressed, and said:

"The pale-face wanders in her mind; there is no one here but Mahaska and her braves."

"Why have you brought me here?" cried Adèle. "What have I done to you, that you should pursue me with such remorseless hatred? Only set me free, and my husband will pay you any ransom. Name your price—but let me go."

The smile died from Mahaska's lips. She leaned forward in her saddle, and hissed from between her clenched teeth:

"He must offer it for your dead body then, for he will have

no time to make other terms. All the wealth of France would not purchase your life. Mahaska does not sell her hate."

Adèle's overwrought faculties gave way at those fearful words, and, with one low moan, she fell senseless almost under the horse's feet.

Mahaska motioned the Indians to raise her and turned coldly away. The preparations for departure were going hurriedly on. Gi-en-gwa-tah had been standing near, and being sufficiently familiar with French to understand, had comprehended the conversation that had passed between the two women. He looked pityingly at the white face, so pure and girlish still; then he turned toward the pitiless woman, sitting there so unconcerned, to make one last effort.

"Let the queen reflect," he said; "she is doing a dangerous thing—"

"Queen Mahaska loves danger," she interrupted, without even glancing toward him. "Let the fire be put out; let the guard make ready!" she called, in a loud voice.

"Let Mahaska at least wait here till the day breaks," urged the chief.

She turned upon him with a look of contempt.

"Wait here that the dogs of pale-faces may come up and rescue her?" she exclaimed. "Is the queen a mad woman to heed such advice? If Gi-en-gwa-tah had no other counsel to offer, he had better leave off his eagle plumes."

The chief was stung beyond endurance by the insult.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah is indeed a chief," he answered, "and Mahaska is only his wife, only a squaw, in spite of the favor his people have shown her."

The woman turned upon him in speechless rage; her right hand moved slowly, as if clutching for her tomahawk, but he paid no attention to the menace.

"The wife of the Governor-chief shall be returned to him," he said.

"Who will give her back?" she almost whispered, in the hoarseness of her rage.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah," he replied. "The chief will not permit his people to be false and treacherous, to gratify the anger of a woman."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah will give her back?" she repeated, slowly.

"He will do it. The French are our allies; we will keep faith with them."

She bent her head with mocking reverence.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah is a great chief," she said; "he wills a thing only to be obeyed. Let him command the queen's guards to give up her prisoner."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah does command," he replied; "here he will be obeyed."

The principal warriors had pressed nearer, and listened in silence to the altercation.

"The braves hear," said Mahaska, turning toward them; "let them tremble before the frown of Gi-en-gwa-tah; they are his slaves."

An angry murmur went through the throng. Mahaska saw her advantage and went on.

"Does it please Gi-en-gwa-tah that the pale-face should be sent back to-night?" she asked.

He understood the mockery in her voice. Worse still, he perceived that he was quite powerless. The chiefs drew around Mahaska, avoiding him.

"Once more, Gi-en-gwa-tah asks the queen to reflect," he said:

"The great prophet teaches the queen," she returned. "The Six Nations wish to break their treaty with the French. When they dance about the death-fire of the Governor's wife, they will feel that they are repaid for many wrongs."

"It shall not be!" cried the chief. "The pale-face shall be given to her husband."

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah save her then!"

He started forward, ready in his single bravery to attempt the fulfillment of her mocking words, but at a signal from Mahaska, he was surrounded by her guard. He dropped his hands and stood gazing upon his captors with a look of angry sorrow.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah sees that Mahaska commands here," she said, slowly. "Let him go back to his place among the chiefs."

Gi-en-gwa-tah leaped upon his horse and rode close to Adèle.

Every thing was by this time prepared for the departure;

the insensible Adèle was placed upon a horse behind one of the guards, and the whole band started rapidly off through the forest.

Gi-en-gwa-tah rode in silence close by the white captive; his face was stern but sorrowful; the mortification he felt at the insult which he had received was light compared with the pain he endured at feeling the power of Mahaska's hate.

They rode on through the darkness of the night, Mahaska giving way in her thoughts to the fierce joy which the capture of her innocent enemy had cast upon her soul. So great was her exultation, that she made her horse leap and prance through the darkness in the exuberance of her glee. This time there should be no escape; her own hands should deal the blow that terminated that guileless life, and she would send the scalp fringed with those golden tresses back to the agonized husband, with only these words: "Katharine is avenged!"

Adèle came to her senses, only to find herself borne swiftly away further and further from all hope of rescue. She looked back; the starlight showed the pallid, terrible face of the woman who had brought this misery upon her. She closed her eyes to shut out the awful vision of fiendish beauty, and allowed them to bear her on.

"Husband! child!" was the agonized moan that broke from her lips; their sufferings made her forget her own.

Mahaska caught the convulsed cry.

"Let the pale-face shriek," she said; "the flames of her death-fire will soon scatter the darkness she dreads so much."

So they rode on. The cold stars looked pitilessly down; the wind shivered by, seeming to bear her the moans of her loved ones, and at intervals the voice of that dreaded woman struck her ear like a warning of the terrible doom of the stake and the death-fire.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN BONDS AND OUT OF THEM.

ALL that night and the next day, the savage troop sped on through the forest. When twilight came, Mahaska issued orders for a halt. She had paid no attention to Gi-en-gwa-tah after their conversation the night before, and he had ridden on almost unnoticed, keeping close to the white captive. The mingled wrath, indignation and sorrow which filled his mind it were not in the power of words to describe. But all the while his pity for the unfortunate captive rose more strongly than those harsher feelings. He was horrified by Mahaska's base treachery; every instinct of his honorable nature rose up against it. He knew that his expostulations would only increase the dangers that menaced the captive, and might, indeed, lead to her instant death. He foresaw that when they reached the tribe, Mahaska's will might not be disputed, and that any arguments he could employ would be treated with disdain by the chiefs, so completely were they under the control of the imperious woman. For the first time he fully realized the extent of Mahaska's power. He now only became fully conscious of the terrible uses she would make of it. Warfare and strife were the rightful inheritance of his savage nature, but uprightness and truth were equally well rooted there, and he shrunk in abhorrence from the unscrupulous path along which she intended to lead his people. There was but one way open to him—he might be able to effect Adèle's escape. He would bend all his energies to accomplish that, and thus save any further open conflict with his wife.

When the second evening came, the Indians proposed to encamp for the night. Adèle became so exhausted by the hard journey, that her guard was obliged to support her on her horse. She had sunk into a state of passive misery, from which, at intervals, a keen pang would rouse her as some recollection of her husband or child intruded like the sudden thrust of a dagger. Mahaska rode all day a little in advance of her prisoner. She was in one of her most agreeable

humors, conversing gayly with those about her, and ever and anon her clear laugh would ring on the air, mocking Adèle with recollections of the time when that sound had been full of pleasure to her ear.

Gi-en-gwa-tah had on the previous evening effected a reconciliation with Mahaska. Not that she forgave him for venturing to oppose her, or had, in the least, resigned her revengeful determination; but, like Catharine De Medicis, she loved to bestow her softest smiles and blindest words upon those whose destruction she was plotting.

Once or twice during the journey, the chief had found an opportunity to make a slight sign to Adèle which filled her heart with a hope, only to die out in new agony as the hours wore on and the distance lengthened between her and all prospect of deliverance.

"We will rest here to-night," Mahaska said, as she dismounted from her horse. "Let the tent be spread, but, before the dawn, all must be ready for departure."

Mahaska's prudence would not allow a fire to be kindled, although there was no probability that their pursuers could be anywhere within the neighborhood, but she was determined to run no risks where her hapless captive was concerned. Adèle was taken off her horse and seated upon a pile of blankets near Mahaska's tent. The moonlight was sufficient to make every object distinctly visible, and, as she sat there in the vacancy of her despair, she could see the woman moving briskly about, superintending every arrangement, doubling the usual number of sentinels, appointing a portion of her guard to watch near her place of repose, and employing every means of security that vigilance, sharpened by revenge, could devise.

They placed food before the captive; but at first she turned from it with sickly loathing, and again Gi-en-gwa-tah passed her, and she heard him whisper rapidly in broken French:

"Let the pale-face eat—she will need much strength before the dawn comes."

She could not repress one start; he moved on with a warning gesture, and seated himself with his back toward her at a considerable distance. She took up the piece of bark upon which the food had been spread, and ate eagerly of the

corn-bread and dried venison; she had been so many hours without food, that the supper brought back an increase of strength, and the new hope which stirred her heart added sudden vitality to her frame.

While she was sitting there, Mahaska approached and stood looking down upon her with an icy smile.

"This is not like the castle to which the Governor's wife is accustomed, and in which my mother pined herself to death," she said, with cruel sarcasm; "Mahaska hopes to receive the lady in her own palace before many days."

Adèle made no answer; she was looking in the woman's face, wondering if it could indeed be real—if she saw before her the girl in whose arms she had so often slept in peace and affection, with whom she had shared every hope and joy, and whose happiness had been the chief study of her young life.

"Can you, indeed, be Katharine!" she exclaimed, involuntarily, giving expression to her thoughts.

"The pale-face mistakes," returned Mahaska, with a warning quiver in her voice; "I am Mahaska, queen of the Senecas, a prophetess among the Six Nations. If the whites gave her another name, she flung it in the dirt with every thing else that was theirs."

"But you were once my friend," cried Adèle, nerved by desperation to make one last effort to touch her heart. "I loved you as a sister—I shared every hope, every enjoyment with you; surely, all recollection of the old time can not have died out of your soul, Katharine?"

"It has not!" she exclaimed, with sudden passion; "Mahaska never forgets! You came between me and all that makes life endurable—you trailed the venom of your smile over every hope of my heart—you usurped my place in the house of my father—you made me an outcast, an alien, and then dared to insult me by offering your pity to her you called the 'poor half-breed!'"

"Had you been my own sister, I could not have loved you more fondly," returned Adèle. "Oh, Katharine, give up those cruel thoughts—even now, I will forget the past and be your friend—"

Mahaska interrupted her with a laugh.

"Queen Mahaska can not express her gratitude for the honor Madame De Laguy offers her," she said.

"Oh, Katharine, do not mock me with such cruel words! There *must* be some tenderness left in your heart! I implore you, by the pious teaching we learned together in the convent, for the love of the Virgin, whom they taught us to venerate, to show mercy."

"The superstitions of the pale-face found no resting-place in Mahaska's mind," she replied. "I am an Indian, the faith of the red-men is mine. I once was Katharine the half-breed, but now am Mahaska, queen of the Senecas!"

"By your father's memory—"

"He broke my mother's heart that yours might fill her home; forced me out of his heart to give you a place there; do not rouse *that* recollection."

Adèle wrung her hands in anguish.

"You have a husband," she cried, "perhaps a child; oh, by the love you bear that little one, have mercy on my poor babe!"

Mahaska clenched her hands in the loose sleeves of her robe and cried in a terrible voice:

"Yes, I have a son, and thanks to you and yours, his father is an *Indian*! Your cowardly prayers can not touch my heart! I tell you, before three days are gone, the winds shall bear the smoke of your funeral-pile toward the husband and child of whom you boast."

Adèle sunk back in her seat and covered her face with the folds of her mantle. Mahaska stood for an instant, regarding her with fierce joy. Then she turned to move away. When Adèle heard the rustle of her robes and comprehended that she was leaving her without a word, she flung out her hands and cried:

"Stay, stay—hear me yet!"

Mahaska paused and looked down upon her with the same scornful smile wreathing her lips.

"Let the pale-face speak quickly, Mahaska has no time to waste in hearing complaints."

"Your nation is at peace with the French," said Adèle, eagerly; "this act will break off all friendship between you—"

"Does the pale-face threaten?" demanded Mahaska, with a calmness more appalling than her rage.

"No, no! But you would not be guilty of an act of treachery—"

"Enough!" interrupted she. "The Six Nations are no longer at peace with the cowardly Frenchmen; they are weary of being cajoled and treated like slaves; the hate that fills their queen's heart now inspires the tribes. We are your enemies and fear not!"

Adèle let her hands drop in her lap. She had exhausted every appeal, every argument, but the woman only remained the more merciless and immovable.

"I can say no more," she sobbed, brokenly; "kill me then. But at least show me one mercy—end my sufferings at once."

Mahaska caught her wrist, fairly hissing in her face:

"You shall die by inches! Would that you had a hundred lives! I have the heart to crush each with unheard of torture! There is no hope—no release! You shall be my slave. There is no degradation I will not heap upon you—no outrage you shall not endure! Death shall be long in coming; every torture, every groan shall be reported to your false husband, and crush him with its agony."

She thrust the wretched creature wildly from her and went away without another word, leaving Adèle crouched upon the ground, so overcome by horror that she could not even comfort her misery by a prayer. She sat upon the earth motionless, until one of the savages approached and made signs that she was to enter the tent. She comprehended that Mahaska did not intend to lose sight of her even for an instant; there was no possibility of release from the panther's lair.

She crept into the tent and lay down upon the greensward that covered the earth which it shadowed like a carpet, but sleep, worn out as she was, would not come to her relief.

There she lay, listening to every sound, while the moments appeared like hours, and it seemed to the hapless creature that death in its most terrible form would not be so hard to bear as the agony of that suspense. She could only lie there in passive immobility, trying to murmur broken prayers, at times roused into keener torture by the thought of her husband and

child, seeming to hear their voices call her, springing up on the furs with a wild belief that it was real, then sinking back overwhelmed with fresh agony by the consciousness of her own delirious fancies.

So the night dragged on, but what time passed, whether moments or hours, the girl could not tell.

When the camp grew quiet, Gi-en-gwa-tah saw Mahaska start softly away toward the forest. Once he might have thought that she had gone to consult her spirits, but the events of the past few days had blotted out his superstitious belief; he determined to follow her.

Mahaska walked on under the forest-boughs until she reached a little natural clearing, and paused. The moonlight made the place clear as day. He saw her glance narrowly about, as if she were not certain of its being the place which she sought. Suddenly her eye caught some white fragment fluttering on a blasted oak, and the chief saw by her face that it was a signal which she had expected. She took her whistle from her bosom and sounded a low call. This was answered from a neighboring thicket, and soon Gi-en-gwa-tah saw a man, gliding from the underbrush, approach her. The watchful and now excited chief crept slowly toward the log where Mahaska had seated herself. He paused within sound of their voices, concealed perfectly by a clump of bushes. He could see the man's face now, and recognized the half-breed, Rene, whom he had seen in Quebec.

"I have had no opportunity of speaking with you until to-night," Mahaska was saying in French.

"You have ridden fast, day and night," he returned; "I had difficulty in keeping in advance of you, but this was our last meeting-place, so I thought I should meet you here."

"Do you know who is with me?" she asked.

"A prisoner I could see, but nothing more."

She laughed.

"A prisoner, indeed! Go back to the English General and tell him queen Mahaska has indeed shaken off all faith with the French: she carries with her the wife of the Governor of Canada!"

The spy gave a start of mingled fear and astonishment at her reckless daring.

"The French will be mad!" he exclaimed.

"Ay, ay!" she said. "But let them come! I am ready to meet them."

"Do you mean to demand a heavy ransom?" he asked.

"A ransom!" she repeated; "for *her*! Man, there isn't gold enough in all France to buy *her* ransom!"

She checked herself suddenly and added in a calmer tone:

"Never mind what I mean, Rene, but listen to what I bid you do. Go back to the English General and tell him what has happened; tell him that my prisoners are my own and he can not interfere; but my people will now be with him to a man. The next battle he fights, tell him to call for as many warriors from the Six Nations as he may wish."

The spy bowed respectfully. One could see in his wicked, crafty face, how his petty soul was overawed by the woman's boldness.

"Rene will do his errand well," he said; "the queen has always been content with him?"

"Yes, yes! You will tell the General that before long the queen hopes to see him; she has many things to tell, many plans to reveal which are for his ear alone. Tell him this, that soon she will reign alone among the Indians, and then—but no matter."

Gi-en-gwa-tah was listening breathlessly to her words; the spy looked at her in surprise.

"But the queen has a husband, a great chief."

"Bah! the power that made can unmake; Mahaska will soon sweep the traitor from her path—his days are on the wane."

Even in that terrible moment, bitter sorrow was the prominent feeling in the chief's mind as he heard those words.

"Has the queen any other message for the General? Would she like more presents for her palace?"

"No, the house is well supplied, Rene. My people believe those gifts came from the Great Spirit. What would they think if they knew you were one of his messengers?"

She laughed as she spoke. How the last spark of faith had gone out in Gi-en-gwa-tah's mind; he comprehended all her falsity.

For some time longer she conversed with the spy, but as

they rose to go, Gi-en-gwa-tah crept away through the bushes, anxious to reach the camp before Mahaska.

His course was clear. Her treachery and deception must be exposed to the tribes at the first opportunity, but he could not think of that now; he had another work to perform. He must save the wife of his ally; that very night she must be removed beyond the reach of Mahaska's vengeance. Silently as he glided away, some sound reached Mahaska's ear. She touched the spy's arm warningly, and both bent their keen eyes in the direction to which she pointed.

Mahaska caught sight of the retreating form and recognized the chief.

"It is Gi-en-gwa-tah!" exclaimed the spy; "he has overheard us."

"It matters not," she replied; "this only seals his fate; an hour after our arrival at the lake village, you should hear his death-song if you could be near."

She waved a careless adieu to the spy and walked rapidly away toward the camp. She soon entered the tent—threw off the fur cloak she had worn during the evening, flung her coronet of feathers upon it and lay down on the bed. Once she drew near Adèle, but the sleepless captive closed her eyes to avoid the sight; and, apparently satisfied that her victim was sleeping, Mahaska turned away for repose. A drinking cup had been set near her bed, for she never slept without a cooling draught within reach of her hand. Before lying down, she quaffed a deep draught and covered herself up with furs.

Adèle heard the sound of her breathing, and ere long she was sleeping heavily. Then, there was a grating upon the side of the tent—a warning whisper reached her ear; a face appeared at an aperture close by the ground, and in the moonlight she recognized the features of the chief, Mahaska's husband.

"Let the pale-face rise," he whispered.

He caught her hand when she moved, suddenly, and drew her toward him.

"The queen will not wake," he said; "her cup was drugged from the medicine-flask. The pale-face must put on the queen's own fur mantle and coronet, and walk out of the tent

come from the conscience-stricken, from the wretch conscious of his own debasement past all redemption. For an hour she remained in her fearful agony—not over her wrecked fortunes, over her lost empire, over the detection of her true character and her humiliating exposure, for all these things her fierce nature could bear; but that she was an outcast, scorned by the savage who had loved her like a Spartan, despised by the race among whom she had come as prophet and queen, and, more than all, that she, a mother, was childless as well as a banished, disgraced wife—all these made her hour of agony one passing all words to depict. That hour had one redeeming virtue—it proved that she was a woman, and taught us to know that beneath the fury of the most violent natures is a deep of humanity and purity which will assert itself at the propitious moment.

At length Mahaska arose, gathered up some of the child's little garments and some of her own clothing, which she made up into a light bundle. Then she took from the drawer of her dressing-case a purse of gold, and her jewels, which she placed in her bosom. A tomahawk and jeweled dagger she cast upon the floor, but, thinking a moment, she picked up the dagger and placed it in her belt. This completed her preparations for the exile; like Hagar, she was banished, but, unlike the Jewess, she had no child to comfort her and to suffer with her. Bestowing one long, agonizing look upon the child's bed, murmuring his name in tones of endearment, she passed out of the castle, by the door looking out upon the lake. Her canoe she pushed off the sands, and, entering it, swept off over the waters just as darkness began to make somber shadows in the forests. Away she sped—out into the gloom until suddenly she vanished from sight, whether swallowed up in the deep waters or caught up into the clouds the Senecas could not divine. They had watched her departure in awe and in fear, for their superstitious souls still were filled with images of her divinity; and when the canoe suddenly vanished it was only to confirm their impression of her league with spirits—whether with the good or the bad spirits, they did not care to say.

The next morning Mahaska's canoe was seen floating on the bosom of the water in the center of the lake, but she was

gone. It was brought to the shore and given to Gi-en-gwa-tah. The chief received it as a token of her final departure and placed it in the castle. Then he closed the building and it was left in all its loneliness, sitting upon the shore of the lake like a watcher daily and nightly awaiting for its mistress to come again, but she came not.

Mahaska, the Indian Queen, was no more.

THE END.